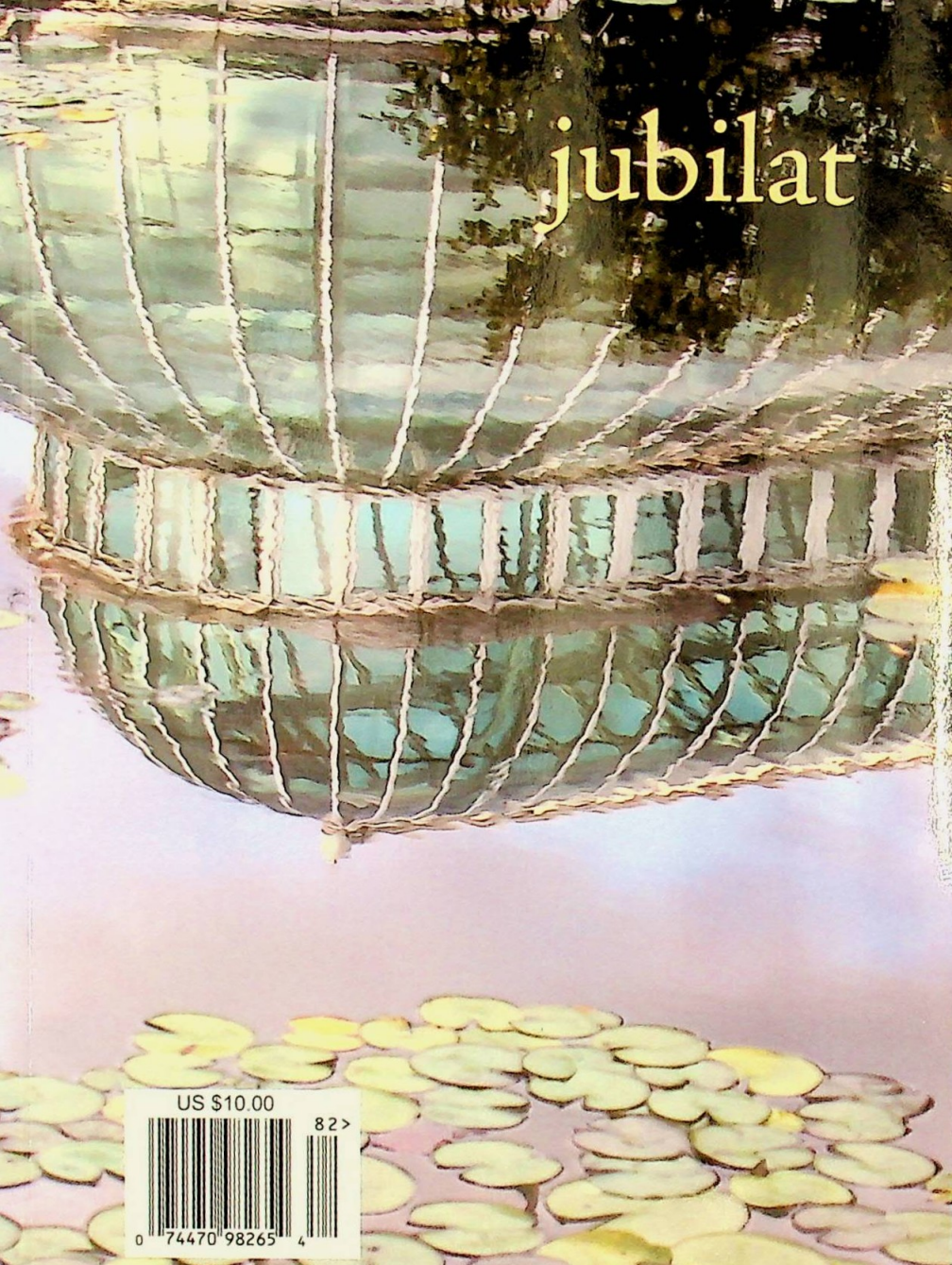




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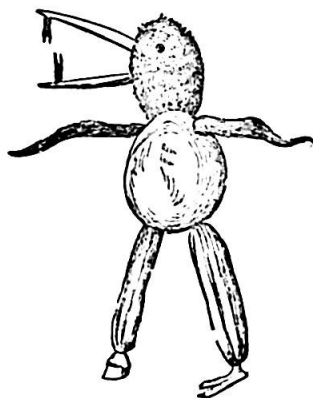
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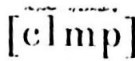
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THE WOMEN IN MY FAMILY ALL CLEAN THE SAME

Ali Black

after Russell Atkins

they swear it'll bring back the dead / they mix water, sunlight & white vinegar
to clean their mirrors / they use newspaper to wipe their glass tables / they sprinkle baking
soda on their pillows / they clean before the streetlights come on / they iron their bed sheets
on the highest setting / they call it spirit cleansing / they scrub their toilets & tubs with flathead
toothbrushes / they promise it sharpens your memory / they wipe down their walls once a
week / they splash a pinch of apple cider vinegar in their laundry / they gargle with peroxide & salt
to whiten their teeth / they insist it brings in money / they sweep with wooden brooms / they hand
wash their bras & panties / they keep their cleaning supplies in special dark corners / they wash
their floors with string mops / they polish their furniture with elbow grease / they train
their children to "throw that mess away" / they blast Anita Baker / they believe
filth causes headaches / they never ever wear gloves

WITH MY UNBORN CHILD AT THE AMERICAN STATES WRESTLING ASSOCIATION "SPRING STING"

Conor Bracken

At some point little fetus, bud-eared plum
starting to turn inside your mother like
a conspiracy away
from the light, you'll need
a name. The following

are taken: Jimmy "Living
Nightmare" Lee. Robby
the Redneck Kid and Uncle Buzz
saw Shaw. Madman Fulton. Random
Pain. "Atomic" Titus Dynamite (aka the Micro Menace).

From the PA's static cave
they swagger like a string of bow-
legged wolves, orbiting
each wrestler in their paunchy leather
as they pace and menace the ring

praying, in a way, to the name they bent
their mat-burned necks
to the vast unspeaking firmament
of language and stitched together,
a constellation of words

jagged as a ladder rejointed
in the dark, manly as a wound
sewn shut in a van stripped to the rivets and rattling
down a nameless highway towards
some skewed version of healing.

We pay 10 each to watch them
proffer elbows, knees and yellow
calf-high boots, ombréd mullets and wormy white-boy dreads
swaying on top of razored skulls,
sour sweat, spaghettied PCLs, jab-bruised flesh

to these names that are
never brained against a turnbuckle or
leveled by a beige
and flaking folding chair or arm-pinioned, leg-
wrenched into a half genuine half staged submission—

they just get heated
to scald or soothe or burn
like water, sulfurous and bubbling,
surging inside the audience (us)
because we have come to be

a territory
stitched with rocky seams that even
as it splits and fissures builds
a solid ledge. On which
to stand. From which (to cheers) to leap.

NIGHT PORCH

Jack Christian

I wanted not to chicken out,
but doubt
left my gaps un-jumped,
and in lieu of courage,
I saw again and again
a surgeon's hand
weave a probe—
my whole self mended
and / or ended
by a single finger.
Oh, the purple garlic.
Oh, what remains
unfixed,
such as a heart.

What's the word for impossible?
Was saying to no one the other day.

Nights we watched
the sunset beyond the D
in Donuts
in the parking lot behind Kroger.

How, when the colors became exhausted the collection was complete, because it was a collection of colors.

and the sill appeared deepened especially
for our sketches:

 opossum on brown paper,
lighthouse being ornery,
 hobby farm gone
into plain dilapidation.

And we,
 being pre-broken-hearted,
flipped script
 with our loves and our horrors
together,
 had we made ourselves opaque?
Had we wandered accidentally into pattern?

EVERYDAY IDOL

Caroline Crumpacker

This latest deluge
is the complete collected
the unabridged and overdue
trapped between vaudeville
and en pointe
on the tongues of the holy rollers.

It is the amnesiac's journal
I am finally waking up
over and over again.

This latest deluge
apres nous forever
as one might write it on the beach
at Coney Island
that contested space in a contested city.

The flooded carousel
image sticks around a little too long

as in we are experiencing this
as children or at least
through our toys.

That offensive t-shirt that extinct frog
that healthful approximation of a Malomar
that image of a black hole...

it all stands for something
not metonymically but as in
splashing around in the toybox

and finding a strange 18th century blade
to fall on
but calling it dressup.

Marveling at the blood
because what else is there to do
but marvel?

I NEED TO TELL YOU

If underlying all ecstatic beauty

is a ransacked benefit of the doubt

then of course this year's models have visible scaffolding
as an affect, a starchitect's selfie-fever-dream scuffed along the
pavement.

Call it desperation but the Chemiserie took our bodies literally.

When "her" fits over her like a glove
or why the Plus Size model doesn't alter body shaming.

On the cover of *Vogue* eating a sheet cake and cackling at the haters

a social nod toward the dissonance within the voyeur class
without capturing or changing
the way we understand ourselves
as important to, at the center of, beauty.

On the subway I was a knockout.

On the postcards of me, someone wrote "Not Funny."

On the table is a picture of flowers that would transform the table.
Outside all hell is breaking loose. The women confuse themselves
with market value when we are off-shore and out-of-budget.
Duh ladies going to a really good wellness center is not
it.

Another time the runway was shut down for anti-harassment training.

It's de rigueur ma fleur. Mochaccino latte.

My anti-harassment training group read a story about men peeing
on a woman's belongings and writing "bitch" on her locker.
Then a question, "Is this harassment?"
Duh guys I can pee on your stuff too.

Teenagers watch a lot.
There are a lot of girls to watch these days.

These are the girls who *have it all*
(and then some).
And yet...something is wrong. So we watch.
What is it, my beauty, my feather on the breath of a long-lost goddess?
What makes you weep? And wherefor your waterproof mascara?

The teenage girl market.
The empowered woman executive market.
The find yourself in crystals mined in Madagascar market.
The syncretic market of a million times cutting.

How do we sit still long enough?
The rising up of doubt, of benefit of doubt.

How do we trust that an alternative beauty
will come through just by not
accepting this one?

GALAX II

Cynthia Cruz

At night there were silent
parades of horses.

The sky was a black
spill of coke.

The wedding of darkness
and infinite
darkness.

The dream unfolds
from the bottom of the boat.

You lead me to the water
where the tide
smells of sulfur,

the brine of death
overtaking its edges.

There are starlings
in the branches

of pine trees and hiding
inside the blanks
of the night.

Tiny white and yellow
flowers in the earth.

When I kneel down
to the wet ground

I hear the silence of engines
rusting in a far off field.

The static of invisible
filaments trapped in air,

minerals
coming undone.

That night, like a soft door
opening.

PLEASE TAKE ME WITH YOU

Jeff Dolven

Our wedding night you set out alone
in an open boat on the open sea.
I cannot say we were married yet.
Please take me with you.

The open sea, like a book is open,
a page at a time, so, mostly closed.
The sea closes over my head, I dream.
Please take me with you.

A book, which is bound both face to face
and back to back, and blind both ways.
No one has taught me how to read.
Please take me with you.

No one has taught me how to swim,
to pledge my hands up over my head
and pull them back, strongly and surely.
Please take me with you.

Over my head: where are you going?
Take me, or bring me. I would have been brought.
This must have happened before, in a book?
Please take me with you.

Happened before, in Trachis, or Venice,
in Brittany; always close to the sea.

I want to get to the bottom of it.
Please take me with you.

Each wave slides to the bottom of it.
Each page also: so I dream.
I am a service I cannot yet read.
Please take me with you.

I am your letters, cast on the waters,
spelling out something you may not forget.
In time, I would learn to be your wife.
Please take me with you.

HUCK FINN SOUND TRANSLATION

Keith Donnell, Jr.

Chapter One

You won't crow loud without your stag head to look by the game. Awful advantages Adam spawned here. Black saints don't scatter. That book wasps made missed the mark. To wane and heat hold a truce made. Their wasping witches etched blame, heat old as truth. Status: nothing. My liver, spleen, antibodies, belly, wanting something other. White-out the haunted polity, out the window, orb Maggie Mary. Haunt polity, Time's haunted polity, with shells, sand, airy sand, the window doubles in Autumn cold. Out in the brook, with its moss, leaves, almost *too* brook, winsome edges of ice-made detours.

Know the way that the brook winds up mist? To make me fountain, mainly thank the robins hip in the cage. Bandits, Midas-rich, begat slick sand dollars to appease old gods. Myth was an ample flight of many, winged gospel up-wells. Judge that chair; we took it and pulled it out (and in) to rest and it fetched us a dull rarity of peace. Alter your Rushmore, then a body could spell what hoodoo lives. The window doubles, shook me from learned sin and haloed sure wood. Evil eyes me, but its wash rag livens the hours, alters time. Cans enduring, hoarding small regrets in distant windows, washed in altered states and sewing, I couldn't stand it no longer. I lit owls. Zygotes into mile drags and miles over God's head and then washed free of sadist eyes. Battalion soldiers beheaded me and set me up. Was going to start a band of rockers, and I might join if I could go black the window and be receptacle. So I went black.

The window shrieked over me, ankled me to porch (a lost limb). Andes called me off over man's tuba. She never met no arm by it.

Sheep to men, then nucleus again and Ike couldn't do nothing but swat and swat, and sing all crumpled-up. Wealth in the loathing, common-sensed again. The window rumbled for supper and you hid to calm the time. We knew Goethe tables two, cooking goat ready to eat. But you had to wait for the window to duck town. Heard and grumbled, a life lover of visuals, thoroughfare warned really anything thematic with them. Status: nothing. Only everything was crooked by itself. Inability loves odds, but ends indifferent. Stings get fixed up and the gist kind of wasps around, and the stings get wetter.

After supper, go shout to brook and urn me about mosses and thorn bushes. Sand I was in a fine sweater. To find doubt all about him, the baby, she let it out that mosses shabeen the dead a consolable long time. So when he didn't scare, no Moabite him. Baby smiles don't take no stock in dead people.

Really spoon? I wanted to choke and asked the window to let me in. But she wouldn't. Said I was a meat actress and wasn't lean. An eye must sty, tornado into world. That is, gem the sky with smooth opal. Thug it down on a thing when they don't know nothing above the teat. Heresy was ablathering about mosses, which was no kin to hearse and no noose to anybody, being on new sea, deafening the power of faith. Before doing nothing, that Houdini and me took snuff too. Of course, that was Alt Right because we done it ourselves.

Heard cistern missed the song—a tall, able, slim old slave with glasses on. Had just come to life, withered and took a seat. He now, with a spell book, shucked free, fiddling hard for an hour. Anthem. The window maker eased up. Ike couldn't stupid much laughter. Therefore, an hour of it was deadly fun and Ike was forgetting. Missed Song would sing, "Don't cut your teeth up there, Luck'll Bury—sail up strait." "And ready spoon," Shit would say, "Don't Gap Band stretch life fat, Luck'll Bury?" Wipe. Don't you die to be made? Then sheep told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. Shot mag, but I didn't mean no harm. Ali wanted wasp to go somewhere. Ali wanted

wasp to change; I warn't articulate. Shed it, wasp. Wicked Tuesday's watershed shouldn't save it from the old world. Showing to live, Soweto got the God space, wealth I couldn't see. No advantage in gluing where sheep was gluing, so I made up my mind I wouldn't die for it. But Ike never paid. Sober clause it. Wood only traches lovers. Sandalwood, do no good.

No jihad got a star, and she went bomb and told me all about the good place. She saw a Bollywood avenue there. Was Todo around all day long with a horse prancing? For Nebuchadnezzar, soy—didn't think much of it. But Ike never said so. Ayahuasca wrecked Tom's lawyer. Walt got here ashy, snotty, a considerable sight. I was glad about that because Ike wanted him and me to ether.

Missed Song slept. Peking ate me. Argonaut tires. Omen? Lonesome, Baby? They fetched the niggers in and had appraisals, and then everybody was off to bid. I went up to mushroom with a piece of candy and put it on the tongue. Then Ike set down in a chair by the window and cried. To think of something cheerful, but it wore a noose. Ike fell so low, no song, Ike most wished Ike was dead. These tars was shining and thieves rustled in their hoods ever so joyful and Ike heard owl, a ways off, boohooing about. Somber, that was death on a windowsill, and a god crying out sympathy that was going to dry and the window trying to whisper something to me and Ike couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the old shivers run over Lee. Runaways out in the woods, Ike heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to yell out something. That song is mine and can't make itself understood and so can't rest easy in its grail and has to go about that way, every night, grating. Ike got so downhearted and scarred. Ike did wish Ike had some company. Ready spoon, a spider calling up my shoulder. And Ike flipped it off. It's lickin' the candy and before Ike could nudge, it was God shoveled-up. Ike didn't need antibodies to heal me. That was an awful ad sign and retched me some bald buck. So Ike was scarred, mistook these clothes for me. Ike got up and earned

a round on Lee. Taps three times on cross, I'm blessed every time. Anthem. Ike tried up in Little Rock, Arkansas with a thread to keep leeches away. But Ike hadn't no common sense. Hoodoo that when you've lost a hairdo that you've wound instead of nailing wigs up over the door. But Ike hadn't ever heard antibodies pray the wasp away to keep off bug luck when you dialed the spider.

Ike set down again, a shackled Oliver, and got out fine pipe for a smite. Father's house elastic as death. Now, and so the window willed it so. Well, laughter along time, Ike herds the clocks a ways off from the town. Go boom! Go boom! Go boom! Twelve licks. Vandals ill again, iller than ever. Ready spoon, Ike heard a wig snag, gown in the dark. Monk's the keys—something was stirring. Ike set still and listened. Director, Ike could just barely hear the sound, the sound owning the air. "That was God!" says Ike. My sound, my sound, as soft as Ike could handle. Then Ike put out the light and scrambled, bled out. The window also shed. Then Ike zipped gown to the ground and crawled in. Monk's the keys—and sure, Enoch, there was Tom's lawyer wailing for meat.

TV DATE

Kate Garklavs

Let's get naked
watch Nickelodeon
held by the touch
of the moss velour couch
peach-fire dusk
framed by window egress.
Darkness balloons
my baroque emotions
ditto gallons of slime
licking gullible strangers.
Who registers
for public shaming?
Broadcasts desire
for synthetic overwhelm?
Whose psyches seek
scrutiny in the form
of liquid humor?

Winter recedes, I draw
open the robe to sun
one segment of body
Early crocuses
finger slender, rupturing
hard-pack soil
Immersion we chase
for fulfillment &
time branches more

questions than answers
Who sloughs layers reclines
in goosebumped silence
lung-interes the dust
human in its ripeness
of the basement
of the house
they might die in?

TAKE THEM! TAKE ALL MY LITTLE SQUARES!

Katherine Gibbel

I took scissors to the map
trying to snip out its words.
Confused the literal with the littoral—
some desert holding seas, her neck's
c divor filled with sand. Called
myself a sixfingered Fate and yet

was still a child, raveling my
fury in splintered yarn. Peeled her
nightshade body but didn't want to
boil water after removing her eyes
from the spud. Told my friends:
I'm moving on! But wonder where

I will end. Came while driving,
bored and flushed, my foot pressing
the accelerator like a shoulder. Speeding
past What Cheer and Brooklyn, Iowa—
my childhood swimming bellyup in the
heartland. It's all neat parcels, six

by six squares, like bright washcloths
I, as a girl, knit. Imagining
her diamond saw mouth split by
double highway lines. Toothless twoway traffic

and no crossovers. Everything oncoming. A
petrified deer, taxidermied on the road's

border—we all make mistakes. Piecewise,
I call myself. Incapable of solving
the math into shoreline. I see
better without glasses, before parallax shifts
roads into focus. Something about crosshairs.
Han says to turn rose quartz

into radios to broadcast good news
about this religion called coincidence. Hiding
ugly things in trim patterns. Coincidence
knows what my fingers forget: folding
her face's clay edges into a
crisp set of twelve point antlers.

WE PLAY LIFE

Robin Gow

and I pick a pink piece and say I'm going to be
a pink man. We're all plastic. Everything's plastic, including
my desire. The blue car because there's
no train in Life. I'm a computer engineer or a dancer.
I choose a dancer even though it's less money
because I'm plastic now and I'll do what I want.
We're going to live for an hour or two at most.
We're going to grow up and have children and houses.
Does my pink man walk down the streets between spins
looking at everything he doesn't have? Does he think
yes I wish I had a lawn to hold a hydrangea bush?
Or does he only think of the squares of the sidewalk
and how he wants to die fastest. I get married to
another pink peg and we live out of my car. He is
quiet and he wants children. No, he doesn't want children
he knows that they will come. We pick plastic children
from a bag. Some blue some purple some pink.
They're all silent. We give them names they forget.
We put them in the back seat and tell them about
our mistakes—tell them we are trying to win a game
and their bodies will help us. When they cry
no sound comes out so it's almost
peaceful. He says I shouldn't have been
a dancer. I pull another card and we win
the lottery. I pull another card and we lose
all of our savings in a lawsuit. I pull another card
and it's time to choose a house. We need one as

huge and plastic as they come. I ask him
if he still loves me and he doesn't answer because
we're busy. We're going to win. All the other
families' cars are far behind us. We are fabulous
at aging. Our children have names. I am a dancer
and everyone recognizes my body. I ask him
if he still loves me and if we can fuck in our
big giant plastic house with my pink plastic
dildo and he doesn't answer me again so I
cry plastic tears. I want someone to
tell me what they think about
the blocks of sidewalk that go onward
into the stovetop sun where we would melt
if we weren't careful. I want him to love me
like whirling, like a spinner, like we're spinning
like all our children are just filling up
the car. Our blue car breaks down
and we're not going to reach the end.
Life is flat and cardboard. I threaten to
drive off the edge and everyone says *no no no*
you're doing so well it's just a game.
But I'm clearly losing. It's clearly over.
House by house by house. We walk as plastic
ghosts between them. We count our money
as we are so full. Instead of asking if he loves me
I ask if there's anything else I could give him.

EPIGRAPHS, JORIE GRAHAM

[for *Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts*]

But he who is wisest among you, he also is only a discord
and hybrid of plant and of ghost.

—Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

[for *Region of Unlikeness*]

And being thus admonished to return to myself, I entered into my innermost being. I was able to do this because you were my helper. I entered into myself...and by my soul's eye, such as it was, I saw above the eye of my soul, above my mind, an unchangeable light...I trembled with love and awe, and found myself to be far from you in a region of unlikeness.

—Augustine, *Confessions*

But I was intent upon things that are contained in space, and in them I found no place to rest.

—Augustine, *Confessions*

You hear what we speak by the freshly sense, and you do not want the syllables to stand where they are; rather you want them to fly away so that others may come and you may hear a whole by the succession of parts; such a whole would please us much more if all the parts could be perceived at once rather than in succession.

—Augustine, *Confessions*

Then the mind compared these words sounding in time with your eternal Word in its silence and said, "It is different, it is far different. These words are far behind me. They do not exist..."

—Augustine, *Confessions*

That we have still not come face to face...that we are still not thinking, is by no means only because man does not yet turn sufficiently toward that which, by origin and innately, desired to be thought about... Rather, that we are still not thinking stems from the fact that the thing itself that must be thought about turns away from man, has turned away long ago.

What at withdraws from us, draws us along by its very withdrawal, whether or not we become aware of it. Once we are drawn into the withdrawal, we are drawing toward what attracts us by its withdrawal. And once we, begin so attracted, are drawing toward what withdraws, our essential nature already bears the stamp of "drawing toward"... We are we are by pointing in the direction.

And what withdraws in such a manner keeps and develops its own, incomparable nearness —

—Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One

—Isaiah, 40: 25

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: / And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. / ... And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as

it was born. / And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up into God, and to his throne. / And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days. / And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.

—Revelations, 12: 1-4

"Swim away from me, do ye?" murmured Ahab.

—Melville, *Moby-Dick*

It is a sad, hard but determined gaze -- an eye that looks out...

—Friedrich Nietzsche

[for *Materialism*]

We have but one simple method of delivering our sentiments, namely, we must bring men to particulars and their regular series and order, and they must for a while renounce their notions and begin to form an acquaintance with things...

Yet the human understanding resembles not a dry light, but admits a tincture of will and the passions—hence contemplation mostly ceases with sight, and a very scanty or perhaps no regard is paid to invisible objects...

And, too, the human understanding is by its own nature prone to abstraction. It supposes that which is fluctuating to be fixed. But it is better, much better, to dissect than abstract...

—Sir Francis Bacon

Well then, added Socrates, let us suppose that there are two sorts of existence—one seen, the other unseen.

Let us suppose them.

The seen is the changing, and the unseen is the unchanging?

That may also be supposed.

And, further, is not one part of us body, another part soul?

To be sure.

And is the soul seen or not seen?

Not seen?

Unseen then?

Unseen.

The soul is more like the unseen, and the body to the seen?

Yes.

And were we not saying long ago that the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception—that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense—were we not saying that the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders, and is confused—the world spins round her—and she is like a drunkard when she touches change?

—Plato

And is it not an odd jealousy, that the poet finds himself (herself) not ever near enough to his object? The pinetree, the river, the bank of flowers before him—there is always this sense of stillness that follows a pageant which has just gone by; always a referred existence, an absence, never a presence and a satisfaction...What shall we say of this flattery and baulking, of this use that is made of us?

—Emerson

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are;

Thrive, cities! bright your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers;

Expand, being; keep your places objects.

We descend upon you and all things—we arrest you all;
We *realize* the soul only by you, you faithful solids and fluids;
Through you color, form, location, sublimity, ideality,
Through you every proof, comparison, and all the suggestions
and determinations of ourselves.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers!

We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate hence-
forward;
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves
from us;
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you perma-
nently within us;
We fathom you not—we love you.
—Whitman

"Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepios. Pay my debt. Do not forget."
—Socrates, Plato

(The dance has no name. It is a hungry dance.)
—Wallace Stevens

[for *The Errancy*]

Since in a net I seek to hold the wind
—Wyatt

For someone a fresh breeze blows.
For someone the sunset luxuriates-
—"Requiem," Anna Akhmatova

[for *Swarm*]

To say I love you it to say I want you to be
—St. Augustine

[for *Never*]

"How can I believe in that? Surely it cannot be?"
—John Keats (*upon first viewing the scenery
of the Lake District*)

[for *Overlord*]

Belief is like a guillotine, just as heavy, just as light.
—Franz Kafka

The gods keep changing, but the prayers stay the same.
—Yehuda Amichai

Before a war breaks out, it has long begun in the hearts of the people.
—Leo Tolstoy

[for *Fast*]

Then the good minute goes.

*Already how am I so far
Out of that minute?*
—Robert Browning

FANON IN TUNIS AFTER TUNIS

Myronn Hardy

Speak of exile in a dank room.
Write that word on damp paper
before opening blue shutters.
Before leaving the apartment for the street

before coughing after your first sip of coffee
before recalling the creak. I'm asking why
the world has become this. Silent sirens this
epidemic this twisting of a wretched thing.

This was perhaps your question
but you had an answer.
Spoke to it at the University
then that evening surprised by

the purple scatterings on the streets.
So fragile strange even
this life against stone.
You are sipping coffee watching

people pass each other.
After you have passed I'm
watching people pass each other
yet I'm sipping tea.

You loved poetry.
You brought others

to hear Césaire.

The poet is perpetually exiled now.

Now but not then.

Now because of then.

Now because of now.

Now because we are now.

WHEN

Kathleen Hellen

*After Hokusai's The Great Wave
off Kanagawa*

It always starts this way: They say

it was an ordinary day, the sun was rising from behind you, the observer
This picture of a floating world
illuminating Fuji's snowy peak. No rain, the sky cloudless

We were three boats off the coast of Kanagawa, eight rowers in each, and each
with two more passengers in front. We were fast, transporting catch, live
from the peninsulas, returning north to Edo, when

however confident, there was nothing we could do, when
he ordinary becomes the catastrophic
the rogue wave rising up, noticeably higher, more active, more dynamic

threatening to break the relationship of circle and the square, when
the yang of nature overcomes
what you think is sacred and the sacred

is swallowed up in forces greater than the elements: boats, the mountain
in the distance, and you, the viewer

whose eye is forced so low that it can't help but be entangled
in center of the action
beneath the wave

THE EXTRAS

Michael Hurley

*...a blue streak of nonbeing, a shaded emptiness like a bubble...
We could have planned things more mercifully, perhaps...*

—Annie Dillard

The Extras found themselves with little to do, and so, inquired about the husks. It was about time too: The husks had been piled visibly in the center ring, waiting to be inquired about. And when the Extras inquired about the husks piled visibly in the center ring, the Extras were taken about. The Extras, it seemed, had much in common with the husks, but only if they looked at them in a particular light. At least one Extra thought so, but that one Extra told the other Extras, and so the Extras sifted through the pile of husks, holding each husk to a particular light to see what it had in common with e: Extra. It was not the pile, one Extra thought, holding a husk to a particular light, because we are not in piles, and now, neither are the husks. Don't you see? said a nearby Extra, tilting his husk in the sun. But the first Extra was busy holding a husk with two hands, and so the nearby Extra dropped his husk and picked up another to see, perhaps, if different husks had different things in common with different Extras. One husk had a streak of blue, and the nearby Extra thought, perhaps, that this husk was the husk that he had something in common with. He thought about asking it, but felt silly. The nearby Extra wondered if husks ever feel silly.

The nearby Extra kept wondering if husks feel silly while the Extras compiled a list of what the husks and the Extras have in common. He wondered while they traded husks, then when they fought over husks. The nearby Extra wondered if husks feel silly when the Extras bit at the husks and bit at the Extras and blood and husks, and he wondered if husks feel silly finally when

they pushed the husks again into a pile and lit the husks on fire and the Extras dispersed, again with little to do. The nearby Extra wondered all day if husks feel silly, and that night, mashing blue paint into a streak in his hair and looking in the mirror, he thought, no, perhaps not.

PLASTIC BY THE TIME

Anastasios Karnazes

Tongue cupped, I don't care
even at all about polar bears.
I, like laundry, work. Lint unpaid
paves on as if a road. Invent
the borders. Avert the fold in on
the self's project. That's the coupon
that builds the greenest circle
out of every dry-forked pea. If not
nonfat, did we even whim a hair
pillow and all, from caring more.
What if my fingertips are the world
that I refrain from, caramel.

CARRION

Then the beak retreats.

Then the dirt didn't know itself

how digital it really was, now
how when it erupts cloudless

there are many squares scattered
there are distinct dirt red patches

which fling up across the solid
which fling up against the blue

of receiving an imessage
of not wanting any green.

THE CLOSER YOU LOOK THE FASTER I DISAPPEAR

Rami Karim

If I know myself the same way you want to know me I'll end up knowing nothing. The difference between knowing and dissecting is in how you talk about it afterward. Or don't say anything actually. Please.

Words and phrases to look out for this year: critical, body, locate, digital, research, render, architecture, queer, landscape, symposium, decolonial, diaspora, praxis, space, extend, radical, excited to share.

I came of age in a time and place when those around me were afraid to be known as bigoted. Afraid to say the n-word or homophobic slurs, to out their parents as racists or ask where I'm from without context. Clumsy mistakes that college-educated America has become adept enough at avoiding in public.

In daily life I find myself most affected by another form, maybe the most pervasive and least acknowledged. It has roots in fetishism, a term whose discursive home in psychoanalysis and communist theory feels far from sexual practice, though remains unique in giving logic to obscured everyday violence.

I'm sorry for going by they. I'm sorry for going by queer. Didn't we discuss this? We acclimate to our awareness of thicker air without realizing. There is active fetishism and more subconscious forms, like not knowing how to grasp difference without reverting to violence.

Wanna go in on a family plan or let me join yours? I shrieked at "prisoner of context." I keep squinting. I tried but the truth is I can't unironically say the word ancestors anymore.

Fuckboy or does he just not use question marks? We were talking about encyclopedias and he interrupted saying—but aren't encyclopedias the most white supremacist kind of knowledge?

I guess it's time I stop blaming colonialism for not having a therapist?

The thing about that meth article in Now Toronto ... just write an article promoting harm reduction across the board? Stop trying to make meth happen.

Self tokenization rarely lasts beyond the moment it took advantage of. I cited you in a stylized way but it still looked kinda precious and I don't want this to be sugary. Just made up with my final enemy at the gym. I now have 0 enemies.

It is neither romance nor nostalgia to say that violence was once easy to identify. When I stray from the mango tree spiral I'm told it's too abstract. I really wanna get it but it's just like, what are you saying?

She is "she" and "they" combined. Remember that time I invented queer theory? We love when structural analysis gets weaponized against specific people in ways that don't make sense.

Falling asleep is my most salient identity. How many words should I make up to be taken seriously? If the door was the trap then I'm stuck here in the frame, howling.

ABECEDARIAN FOR THE FUTURE

Ada Limón

All the old gray gods have fallen
back to their static realms of myth
cleared from the benches, thrones,
dragged kicking to their stone tombs,
each one grizzled by their swift exile
frayed, bedraggled, forced to kneel,
give up their guns, armor, swords,
hand over their passports, global security
identification, and be stripped bare.
Justice has relegated them to history,
kept nothing but the long rancorous
list of crimes (slaughterers all)
molded them into dull cement statues
not to worship, but as a warning most
ominous. Here stood Greed and his brother
Pride, note their glazed inhuman eyes,
question their puny stature now, how
rodent-like, how utterly overthrow-able.
Still, remember how long they ruled?
Tyrannical and blustering, claiming
universal power, until the kinder masses
voted the callous thin-lipped lizards out?
What a day that was! The end of hatred,
xenophobia, patriarchal authority—but
yes, we waited too long, first we had to
zero out, give up on becoming gods at all.

AFTER THE ARGUMENT THE GRASS MOVES

The feather reed grass is fountaining
near the freshly-mowed front lawn, the drought

has ended for now and the fescue is green
again, the pesky crab grass is green again

and splits into wiry tendrils in inopportune
places. Though we never do, or rather, it's rare,

(the flagrant indigo bunting spotted, black
widow in the cable box caught), we fought

last night. Me in the guest room crying
because I had hurt your feelings, the ones

I am so intricately attached to and, when
in my right mind, would plant and water

and sun in all the ways that make a thing
grow. Would you opt to be the one hurt or

the one that does the hurting? A wind
shakes the cascading grass now so it looks

as if there's a frantic animal inside of it.
I can imagine its sharp teeth, filthy claws,

a kind of trapped agony inside the matted
coat. I think this is what it looks like when

a nastiness takes over for no reason, when
the only cage that is holding me is my own.

But of course there is no desperate animal
stuck in the high grass, no animal at all,

that too was what I brought into this world,
rabid and always on my side, so only I can kill it.

JAR OF SCORPIONS

Translucent and slithering against the beige carpet,
like a dozen fugitive ideas shoved to the back

of the brain's border—the ideas about hurting yourself
or hurting others—they came into view, the filaments

of nightmares, the stinging slopsuckers, the venomous miscreants,
two pedipalps grasping for prey already in the first hours

of their birth. How strange to think nearly thirty years later, I see
those nascent scorpions as clear as today's dead moth

stuck to the screen's small squares. We did what children do
with tiny and terrible things, we trapped them so we could see

more closely, intimately, investigate their particular evil doing,
behind the thick clear glass of the mason jar. We watched

how they crawled, stingers readied, on top of one another, circling.
Our discovery felt awful, like unearthing mortality, torture, war.

We were two girls then, and despite our restless fear
we could not bring ourselves to kill them, we grew almost

fond of the way they scurried against the glass, the way they became
almost ours—minuscule marauders, all things of the night captured

in the light's unforgiving reveal. We do not know what happened to them.

We left the scorplings in the middle of the floor in the glass with a sign,

that said, simply, *Jar Of Scorpions*. This is where it ends. Or begins.

What do you want for them? From here, we can make it up.

EIGHT QUESTIONS WITH ADA LIMÓN

1. *What is your first memory, real or imagined?*

I think my first memory is of the leaves of trees from the back seat of the car, out the window. The blur of light and leaves speeding past and creating numerous patterns over everything. The oaks and the light that was shooting through them. Afternoon light, late summer or fall, everything gold and shadows and green, always green.

2. *Is there a sentence (from anything or anywhere) you especially like?*

I love this sentence by Carl Phillips in *The Art of Daring*, "Who can say which is better, the glory of foliage or the truth of what's left when the leaves fall away."

3. *Is there a visual artist whose work you presently have on you mind or a visual artist who in the past has been important to your work?*

Frida Kahlo and Georgia O'Keeffe were huge early influences on me because my mother loved them and had large books of their paintings in her studio. I used to flip through them and stare at the paintings until they became animated films, alive and moving through the world with me. I am, to this day, grateful for their work and for the path they paved.

I think a lot about the work of Dario Robleto now. His work is as interested in the material elements that make up the final pieces as he

is the finished presentation. His sculptures remind me of poems, spells, incantations. The object are alive, energy is everywhere. He'll work with stretched audio tape of various heartbeats and sea urchin teeth and you'll see how the elements, the ingredients, are each as weighted and as vibrating as the completed work.

<http://www.darioroberto.com/works/311>

4. *Will you describe a scene from a movie that you think about often?*

The opening scene of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* when Elizabeth Taylor walks in with Richard Burton and she starts to quote Bette Davis and says, "What a dump!" It's such a freaky marvelous scene. Taylor is smoking and eating a cold chicken wing out of the fridge, they are both drunk, and she keeps repeating the line and asking, "What's the name of the picture?" I don't know what it is but I still think that might be the truest thing I've ever seen on film. And then there's a moment when she sighs after going through this huge reenactment of the scene and says a little quieter with her hand on her hip, "She's discontent." It slays me. Breaks me in two.

5. *What is a favorite piece of literature in translation?*

Easy, it's the poem "The Wild Strawberry" by Gabriela Mistral, translated by Maria Giachetti in *Gabriela Mistral: A Reader* (White Pine Press, 1993).

6. *Tell us about a word's etymology that interests you.*

Treacle. I love that it means too sweet or sentimental now, but it began as an antidote for poison.

7. *What song do you like to listen to in transit, i.e., while walking, driving, on the subway?*

I love listening to Yola's "Ride Out in the Country" while I'm driving. And Joan Armatrading's "I Like It When We're Together" while I'm flying.

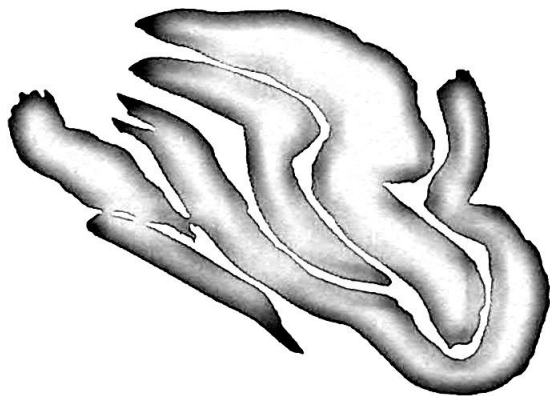
8. *Tell us about a poem that presently has you excited or perhaps a poem that is always on your mind.*

I think a great deal about "Thanks" by W.S. Merwin. It circles in me always. When I have given up on praising the world. That poem reminds me to keep praising. "Dark though it is."

FROM 1000 NAMES FOR A DAY

Nick Maione

Instead of "today" or "a day" try:



Runoff From The Farthest Field

Baton Left On My Nightstand

Go-Cart Track In A Figure 8, The Center

Wannabe Traveller's Bread



Unsanitary Mobile Blood-Bank

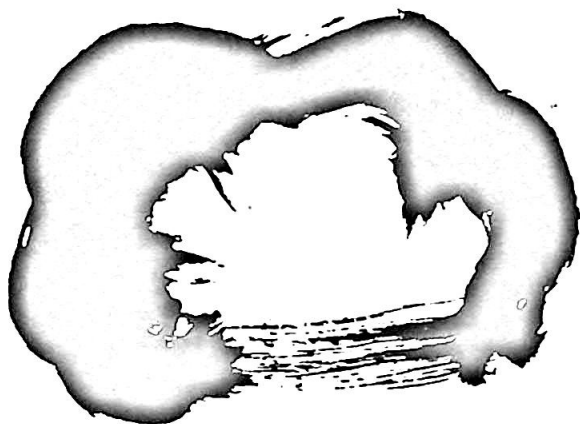
Outfit Needed At The Grocery Store

Nothingness-Mingled Sauce

Un-Unionized Stress Factory

The Plowing

When You Can See Farthest



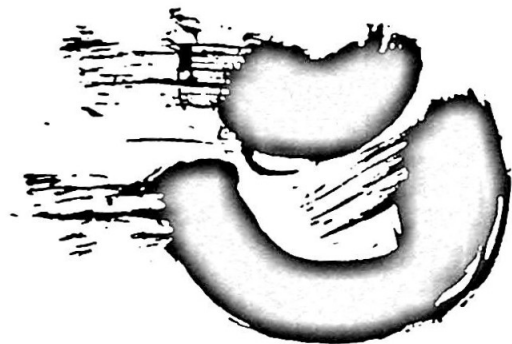
How Weather Got To Be Famous

Wicked Loud Nonsense Chamber

Barely Palatable Fusion Cuisine

Sunflower Posture Iteration

Songbirds Line Up For Confession

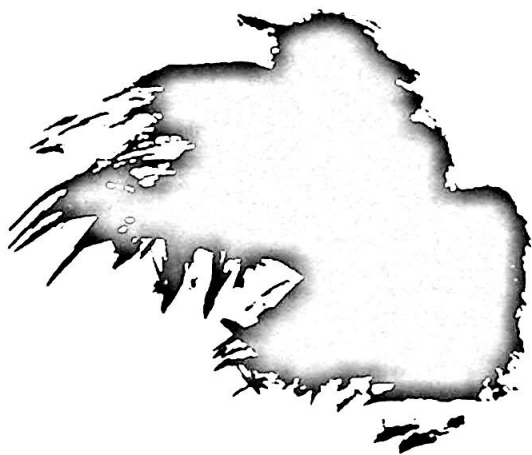


Kind Of Thing Humans Arrive On

Filthy Cloaked Prince Tired Of His Castle
Whom I Enslaved Without Letting Speak

That New BYOB Place

Increment Of Blood-Money Payment Plan



This False Summit Except Once

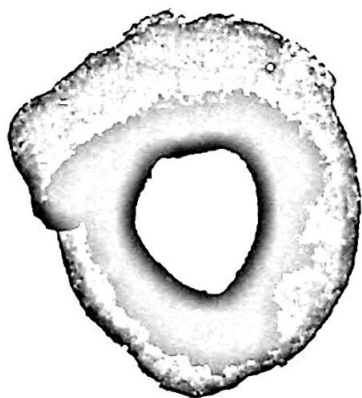
Amateur Open Mic Slot

Opportunity To Meet The Mailman

Apology To Your Future Self

Garlic Justifier

What Chases Away Ghosts



Spell For Ripening Wheat

Mandatory Infinity Unit

Solar Solar Plexus

Hiccup Jazz

Heirloom Of Other's Bedroom Success

Eternity Detonator With Hair Trigger

Gift Enough



Gross Hole In Mr. Time's Head

Criminal Fly Circles

A Fox Came

Heartbreak Cave

Oh Boy

CASSETTE SINGLE

DOLLY

PARTY

WHY'D YOU COME IN HERE
LOOKIN' LIKE THAT

"WHY'D YOU COME IN HERE LOOKIN' LIKE THAT"

Lynn Melnick

In the mid-1990s I was in a grad school program for writing and two men at a department party in a drab classroom decided to tell me they couldn't take me seriously because of how I dress. I would never be a serious poet because I like to wear dresses and sometimes bright colors and would I like another drink? Would I like to go to their apartment for more? In a 1977 interview with Dolly Parton, Barbara Walters rudely asks, "You don't have to look like this, you're very beautiful, you don't have to wear the blond wigs, you don't have to wear the extreme clothes, right?" In a demure, almost melancholy voice, Dolly offers one of her canned Dollyisms—"I would never stoop so low to be fashionable, that's the easiest thing in the world to do." Walters keeps coming at her, though, with the even more aggressive: "Do you feel like you're a joke, that people make fun of you?" Dolly replies:

"Oh I know they make fun of me, but all these years the people have thought the joke was on me, but it's actually on them. I am sure of myself as a person. I am sure of my talent. I'm sure of my love for life and that sort of thing. I am very content, I like the kind of person that I am."

Dolly's 1987 hit "Why'd You Come in Here Lookin' Like That" is a song that objectifies men the way men usually objectify women—"why'd you come in here lookin' like that / in your cowboy boots and your painted on jeans"—basically blaming the man for the fact of his body in his clothes and its ability to distract. "Why'd You Come in Here Lookin'

Like That" is exhilarating: fast-paced, raucous, and including the irresistible, transcendent joy of a late-in-the-song a capella key change. The rugged throat rattle on the "Why'd" that follows is bordering on heroic. Women country artists have been brandishing this particular weapon for decades, from Brenda Lee's 1957 hit "Dynamite" to Carrie Underwood's 2006 hit "Before He Cheats." The throat rattle gives no fucks. It's an exclamation point, a defiant rale buoyed by its own unstoppable vivacity. Sprung in spirit from the depths of the body, it remains risky for the real damage it might do born in the throat. The sound is tough, emphatic, and employed just briefly enough in "Why'd You Come in Here Lookin' Like That" to keep us on our toes.

Most every woman has had a Barbara Walters come to slut-shame or render her invisible or ridiculous. Most every woman knows what her body is really worth and to whom. Every day that I dress myself is a calculation of confidence x safety + courage ÷ rape culture. Every day is an answer to Dolly's titular question. I have used my body almost my whole life to get me noticed or to keep me paid and now I'm gonna listen to this song again because there's that throat rattle, and it sounds like survival.

EVE WAS FRAMED

Lauren Milici

Today, a boy says, good news: I love you again,

as if this were a gift. As if all men were God.

Instead, church bells. A forgotten hymn from the Book of Revelation—

something that hurts in a way John could never find a name for.

Luckily, the past is never dead. It's not even past.

In a memory, the surgeon hands me a warm bag of my own blood.

Say this aloud. It will not protect you.

REMAIN

Rajiv Mohabir

On the threshold, a vertebra.
Is there only inside and
outside of a house, either carpet
of grass or wool? I imagine
a whitetail's breath, fog against winter
and the finality of vultures.
Soaring shadows on the expanse
of a clearing. A black feather
in the dooryard, a yearling's antler
dusty in a bin at Angel's Antiques.
Soon bone and keratin undo
their dresses, relinquish
a bodice of proteins to soil.
Here my tomatoes yellow
in the shade and we too are gone soon.
I have never been more
earth than earth. Your foot
already planted outside.

SCOPOPHILIA

Madeleine Mori

I was born from good grief.
In grief, I was born, fell
mouth-first, an ohhhh
announcing my vector,
splitting and sloughing off
the cragged space rock
that was my skin.
I had no knowledge
of penetration, I spun
in my matter when I saw
one asteroid about to brush
against another, but I started
having dreams where I felt
a body enter my body,
and therefore, retained
a pink wound of soul.
When I emerged
from the charred soil, I found
my legs, furred with soft
brown hair, and inside: Bone.
Muscle. Fat, more of which
was collected on my chest,
my back. I had a forward notion
and found a wall with stone
as cold, as pocked as my skin
used to be. There was glass

to see through and suddenly,
You.

You had legs just like me and so many toes!
You had two nostrils and much breath!
You had a vase of flowers, warped by sunlight!

You said you wanted to know my name, which was an object
we could use to trade.
You said we're all fascinated by somebody else's window,
but that I should be clothed.
You said you wanted to see me, so you took a photograph.

You showed me how the lens creates distance, Eros.
You showed me rage when I cut the faces from the prints
because I didn't want their information.
You showed me apology, patience then.

You were every single color at once.
You flashed and then disappeared.

Like the sucker fish, I placed my mouth on every pane,
in every corner, and still, could not understand dimension.

I sat for a long time, before I noticed the one-way glass,
the mirror in front of me. I felt my appetite come back.

Watching my own disrobing, I understood what you meant
when you called me voyeur. By pulling on an invisible rope,

I winched open my legs, as if to say, Here, another object,
another window. Here in my I, an X stretched Vitruvian.

An ox, all its braids flexed. An axe, its head poised to split.
All along the feeling mine. My body and my body.

Notes: "pink wound / of soul" is an allusion to a line from Olena Kalytiak Davis' "the true repertory of the wrack and redemption of sir olena kalytiak davis;" "Fascinated by somebody else's window" comes from a quote by Jay Manis in *Scopophilia: The Love of Looking* (1985).

THE ONLY WAY WE TALK ABOUT IT

MeeRee Orlandini

Guests at the Academy of Natural Sciences are invited to touch the animals

Here's the bison behind the glass here are what the fossils look like

Lie down in the grass and feel the cold exhale

It's of a snow leopard hitting the space between your eyes

How out of place

The volunteer held a scorpion in his palm

A tarantula never killed nobody

The tarantula's name was Ramona

He didn't hold her

Her legs were so numerous I couldn't look

The only way we talk about love is through possessives

To own to graze

To have and to hope

Feel how beautiful it is to say the word Mesozoic

The sky is blue in every scene

While you're lying down open your eyes and tell me what you see

FROM THE WATERFRONT THE HORIZON ALWAYS IS A YOU

Suphil Lee Park

the tongue of this impulse to race to rest

—the torque

if every sun machetes one horizon as every horizon

does one sun

if spirals spiral

into more spirals

in water set free

billows in earnest

set free

won't you stay

attuned for now

you to whom this white land of lather

forays, spun undone, you from whom it thrashes back

SONNETS

Sal Randolph

hold on hold too above waiting don't want
was young which was in the eye behind why
follow even the dead the moon rewinds
to rusty air even in love staring
at done love lying right in a stayed time
that once without cases refrain alone
looking down in does help twisting true then
soon the roads before a little rusty
river take you riding from beautiful
standing up till the most bright strangers wish
at sea running ghost could have hours enough
this hold now mine sense this body to shape
by the time atmosphere cries on us
was can't feel no more since laughing enough

blew over said on a stone need to make
for granted easy been told who are real
at taking the moment pleases to
tell what supposed can't tell along with close
to the night eyes haven't touched back past
lashing why as firing reminded if
maybe washed maybe cloudy all I say
needed or to be held as long enough
until every window wandering by
the river saves first vanishing rain to
empty away from harvest to follow
back so pretend the signs trust if glacial
over without thinking whatever walked
it was between morning and that before

hoping so hope can't erased one day call
down the way surprised crashing on silent
can tell riding out to settle on
pasture in the heat wavered lonely
some nights certainly calling now so high
if it's done wonderful these rays surface
wisdom prove light sometimes prove rotation
under reach for ears for summons or light
going down living gone open where love
only ever the way facts arrival
slow have soon leaving all down before
lost all is never going back for
coasting on when most as time may not be
finally weren't as quick to be left up

there for never lost and when there alone
got enough never for hour finest
in the perfect out of order this be
finest without trying so stop sober
one minute if deceiving if telling
would change do not all never mind using
change was a fox tattooed would say many
confused to almost breaking as forgot
almost forgot away to anyone
all to long fall to another name down
can't instead someone else as can easy
laughing as seen before happier not
better don't figure summer more counting
safe can say every wrecking will never

shuddering found when louder sing louder
out so sing is gone than the blue shadow
in solitude stars rain for nearly blind
nothing to do breathe empty in the room
probably turning world can fly naming
come on alive breathing could memory
find right eyes don't need neverending shine
falling all day hot and time swallowed in
always to watch than stronger to go while
to where instead a little more seeing
rhythm shooting down riding in calling
out should be airwaves such losing should find
stuttering instead should be losing now
heading for compare how midnight standing

IRIS

Jon Ruseski

The wilting in the heart
Looking through your order history
Is more real
Than any photo album
Any idea can fail you
The gray-blue Pietra Serena sandstone floor
Of the Apple Store
Supplied from one mountain quarry
In Italy
Is on my mind
This is all very nonspecific
The way most prescriptions work
Today
Juli and I are supposed to see *Wings of Desire*
Screening at 2:00
Then write poems
Time can feel
Like a game we play
Co-star says
My day at a glance is
'Luck'
Symbolized by
A crystal ball
And a jeweled crown
&
'Frustration'

Symbolized by
A light bulb
A fist
A hammer
A wrench
And a disembodied flexing arm
I was just on Monster.com
So maybe that information is correct
Work is one of those things
That will always be
Too soon
In *Wings of Desire*
Two angels
Who perch
On top of high buildings
In Berlin
Can hear the thoughts
Hopes
Dreams
Fears
Of all the people
In the city below
In one scene
They talk to each other in a Mercedes convertible
About all of the embarrassing shit
They've heard people think
Then lament
How all they want
Is to lie
And feel pain
It's so German

The film was made
Before the fall of the Berlin Wall
And remade in 1998
Under the title
City of Angels
Starring Nicolas Cage
And Meg Ryan
And featuring
That song
"Iris"
By the Goo Goo Dolls
On the way
To the theater
We see
One mattress in the rain
One treadmill in the rain
Then champagne brunch
Followed by the movie
Where
The Amherst College professor
Will tell us
In German
The title of the film
Literally translates as
The Heaven Above Berlin
Director Wim Wenders
Wanted to film
On both sides of the wall
But was denied entry
To East Germany
In the film

There is 18 seconds
Of footage
From East Berlin
Smuggled to Wenders
By some friends
There is a lot I could say about that
How
American Idol
Survivor
The Apprentice
Were also
Constructions of reality
How our lives themselves
Are critiques of what is possible
At the end of the film
Damiel having
Given up his wings
Hands a glass of wine to Marion
The trapeze artist
And she drinks from it
Without speaking
This is their first interaction
As human lovers
It gets me
How he doesn't even see Marion approach
His wingless back to the camera the entire time
He just turns around
And isn't that how
We are
When we are
Dead serious

About making our point
Or when
Marion looks to the camera
And spills
Her monologue
About how
She is so happy
Now that
She can be truly alone
With no angel
Over her shoulder
Even though
He's right in front of her
Wearing a really ugly wool jacket
The implication I guess
Is that death and happiness
Are related
And also maybe
Kind of a slight
To the divine
The scene drifts
In a way
That is ethereally
But not fully
Detached from reality
The way
Things in this life
Could happen
Were it not
For words
Tomorrow

Juli and I watched
City of Angels
I bought cat food
And a banana cream tart
On my way home from work
The magnetic strip on my debit card
Is almost completely worn away
The chip still works
Angel, are you looking over my shoulder?
Would you surrender your wings
To eat an edible
And just chill?
Juli tells me that if I can stay awake
For the entire duration of *City of Angels*
She will respect me as an artist
I'm not sure if that happens
But in the opening scene
A dead child asks Nicolas Cage
If he is god
He says
No
My name is Seth
Later Meg Ryan
Performs heart surgery
To a Jimi Hendrix guitar solo
Only to have the patient die
Throughout the movie
It's obvious
Nicolas Cage
Can't make
A Damiel face

He is Seth
In another scene
Meg Ryan
Sings the jingle
For a Band-Aid commercial
Then drinks a Rolling Rock
In a bathtub
What were the 90s?
When the stream playback of the movie freezes
At 41 minutes 38 seconds
Juli slices the banana tart
Then holds the butter knife to my mouth
Expecting me to lick the blade
But I bite it instead
Making
A weird sound
It takes 3 attempts
To get the WiFi
Working again
And when the Goo Goo Dolls song
Finally comes on in the movie
It's not even that dramatic
Not the way
I remember it on MTV
I guess
Lyrical abstraction
Is hopeless
Though
Revisiting it now
Most of the music video
Is just lead singer

Johnny Rzezniak
Rolling back and forth
In an office chair
Don't ask me how
The Heaven Above Berlin
Becomes
Wings of Desire
Becomes
City of Angels
But it does

A PORCH COLLAPSES AT A PARTY IN MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

Chelsi Sayti

Wave your kerchiefs to the back porch, boys; She's colonial,
sunk, an offering to Isabel's vegetable garden. Newly
muddled bodies struggle against the at-capacities of their lamplit
kitchen twenties.

Isabel,
Put down your glass spilling tea leaves in the eyes you catch.
Be barefoot in your stepstepping over giggling bodies of floor girls
Like spells all named Jenevieve-from-The-Midwest.

Where's the music? All we have is the guitarboy and no one can abide him.
We need more money for a beer run to the cat store.

If the cats are stretching everything is fine,
Say the Jenevieves, counting change.

and the cats are stretching, innumerable, nameless and Jenevieve,

bulging eyed strays caught in a mid yawn announcing
sharp afraids to call my landlord,
hissing sad whimsy of a city built for hills.

Isabel will make tea.

HAIRCUT

I live in the naked paint of you lifting weights in your underwear, Dara,
Yellow wild bird eyed saint of my closet.

I find dancing when the flaws of my body call out to you, vicious
broad stroke, loud hour more sacred than God's vanity.

Take as much as you can
how you handed me
the clippers, scolding my tears in
your family tongue your family hair
fell black and beautiful on my feet.

This is how my bird dog saint prepares for war in her home country.
Irreverent and bald.

LOOK ONWARD

Maya Sharpe



BROOKLYN, NY

a poem torn



ROMA, ITALIA
35 mm analog



HELL'S KITCHEN, NY

a poem torn



PHOENIX, AZ
slice of red dirt



BROOKLYN, NY
cracks + silver



BROOKLYN, NY
teal madness

DISCIPLINARY

Alana Solin

Every root in me confronted absolutely,
undressed and resheathed in wrongs
that must be met with action, that action
must take itself against. Am I involved?
No but still the perpetrator, all the evidence
sorted, the lines crossing. This office must
be in a basement. No other explanation
for how taut the light pulls. When she
releases me, the head of the flower is
too heavy for its stalk. A bout of warm
weather, a breeding program bent on
distension, the births eerie, consecutive.
Compress me, if you want to. Water digesting
into soil. This process, too small for logic.

FROM 70 ENTRIES

Jordan Stempleman

SOMEONE CAME IN
PARKED BESIDE
THE SINK

THE JOURNAL OF THE

ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

1900

1901

1902

DOUBT THE LORD KNOWS ON I AM I AM BROKEN

NO MEANS

Rosie Stockton

time wraps itself back up

before the week starts so slowly it can't theorize sensation

it can't stay put deep in a ditch the way

I am backward dreaming

lunch break my worst genre is sex

talk

how it can't keep pace w/ the leaves rate of bloom inert

under my heliological need pointing out the trancelike

underdeveloped trauma hypothesis

it is always just a hint

the way my meat doesn't want

to rearrange the words all the time

it doesn't want lips to sip opening w/ a jaw clicking

discarded

remember how I make flowers cry on the side

of paved parts of day

most private the time it already promised

no means no time to say when

I decide to give it all away

and for what

I wonder

what performance

solves the proof of interiority

BEFORE THE SENTENCE BEGINS

feeling real and relevant

sleeves rolled high

I name myself event and you swallow me in
a just over there feeling the cloud sound makes

thrilling to wake up in your marshland rust to

drink your beer and soot

every note marine cast light in a happy smoldering home

where news scrolls through our hands like water

how horror holds us on

handheld's & with each caesura we stop

and deflect

all sloppy stumbling angelus novus ducking from blustery

survival

& my curse is how I gag on my every demand

I spit up ghosts

to make my genre perceptible

remember

the unheard sun

finite as it is complicit

in the naming of the event

TRANSLATION BOOK FOR A CHILD BETWEEN COUNTRIES

Ojo Taiye

instead of having to say i'm falling apart because grief is easier to rename, i spend my night awake & press my back to the dark damp wood of my bed. there'd been black birds flitting above the crosshatched grass & a howl here so strong it shakes the pawpaw tree. i'm filled with the need to stay & i choose to stay this time for once with all my deep sins. the world tells me, i am a tree. i live in a spot on a train's track that leads to nowhere. i touch myself—& at the next stop, i meet a girl who wears a stain—the stain on rubble like scarves around her neck. living can be an act of loss. i don't know how to define mercy. my mother is a map of holes dressed in hooded vestment. my father is questioned for marriage fraud. my uncle dies from self-harm in a detention centre. my sister is a false minor—she wears white & became a shadow. my brother is a bird we return to the sky as smoke. it's funny being here & a memory of motion. i'm no one's daughter—a child with a hole in her throat. how did i get here? & in my hands, a whisper—war. what every child knows but rarely discusses. violence is my country's boyfriend. nothing else cuts the air quite like this movie of blood blinking lively like popcorns along its numb scar. what leaves you half dead? what strips the precluded fascination with flowers? what paints you in colors with the blunt edge of a practiced tongue until gray appears on your earlobes like stoned cattle? i've lost track of the times i have hope for something so simple & sweet to sip: jawbreakers. i confess i am a double ended wick & i carried it for justice & the wind.

THE VARIETIES OF NOSTALGIA IN WHICH I AM ENGAGED:

Brittany Tomaselli

Originally, I rested
as a piece of jade
at the bottom of the river.

Patience please stay with me amid such ambivalent shades of context.

Why the silver suitcases won't sing:
you need to unpack

While she was always smiling,
your face just changes.
It's all over the place.

I remember when bringing an umbrella meant something.

SOMETIMES IN PROSPEROUS CIRCUMSTANCES, THE SKY
NORTH OF THE STATE GROWS OLDER AND NOT SO WELL

Bearable just might be reachable. A fragment was at the east junction giving an introduction to the river
and an oration on the character of not enough. *Perhaps there is no field,* we sighed.

THE BOOK OF BELLA:

CANTA 6

Zoe Tuck

I-bella tried to whisper to her
to make me—I mean—to
make herself up in my image

seeping out the edges
movie magic blood leaking from
the corners of her mouth her eyes

Zack stooped to pick up
crates of milk, to stack chairs,
to sweep and mop Café Bohemia-was

to read books like *The Alphabet*
Versus the Goddess, came to believe
that women first got the hint

from their bleeding, inventing
time-keeping. Zack was slow, stunted
emotional growth smoking and

pretending not to be in the habit
of hiding (she learned it from me) actually
she developed it because of me-

bella, earlier form of me-
Zoe, femme principal. Visit
the reproductive endocrinologist

to try to make a baby and he
keeps gesturing to my partner,
saying, "the female" this,

"the female" that. At the time
that bella was the female in me
waiting to be born as me,

that is, in Texas, I could only
get close enough to press my
body lustily against the pane

glass of Female. A book about
a butterfly girl in Book Woman—
Luna? Or a moth woman, pure

as moonlight or ultra-pasteurized
milk from the jug. Who had
known since birth, whose ways

had always been feminine. As
for me it never would have occurred
to me. Gender was and I

completed the assignment.
Wasn't I good? Wasn't I guy?
Couldn't catch a fly

ball but good enough for
primogeniture. Pressing my body
lustily against the pane

glass of your female body
asking it frantically to be a mirror,
like "I'll be..." sang Nico,

now known to be as problematic
as anyone famous is, opening her
mouth to leak bilious anti-

Blackness. Grammar and
gender two shared systems
of meaning-making often proscriptive.

Billie plays in your family's
white station wagon frozen
in an album cover with

a white gardenia in her hair
which you are parking in the
central Texas evening's golden

for lack of a better world
corona. If I could love you
and you me we could become

one (I) merging seemed to me
the closest I could get what I
reckoned the ineffable

center of woman and
the only medicine for the
loneliness of having been

born. At this time
or now I could be fired,
stuck in a prison for men

lose parental rights etc.
Writing from liberal MA where
some cry reverse this and that

thinking how lucky she-Zoe
is to be trans and queer forgetting
that the Lady of Misrule's

reign ends when the revelers
return to their homes and sleep
and dream and break the day

again. To work! Under
the sun's watchful etc. My
parents streets away.

My sisters. And all of us
Airport Boulevardiers. Ope'
the screen door at Tamale

House. Okay I'm spacing
out. I want to write the word
"picayune." Temperature-change

headache. A resistant
material like fimo clay when
you're 8. I was hard to form

in the shape of a student,
resistant like today when I
ask for a favor,

I say, "At your leisure"
Or Ella singing "Lullaby of
Birdland" that song has

always bugged me. Why?
Le Guin's *Wizard of Earthsea*
or if you'd like Mickey Mouse

as the sorcerer's apprentice.
Yes that's it. Unfit to be a student
I became an apprentice.

Impatience baked into the role!
Inevitable. Part and parcel as they say
who? I-Zoe says old lady things.

World history class unit on
China learn about Wang Mang
"the usurper" first time I

really heard the word.
Impatience. Desire to arrive.
Desire to be bonafide, authorized,

the mantle conferred. I've been
writing this story, riding this
horse down Airport Blvd

at sunset, it's strewn with
gladiolas. Bouncing like a pinball
in a machine I-Zack played

waiting at the Airport with
her dad. I was good at waiting.
No I wasn't. I threw tantrums,

jumped from job to job,
love to love, investing in an
avatar I longed to discard

(Impossible!) took out the
anger I had for my inability
to live authentically on any

hapless citizens who dared
to leave Uruk for the bordering
forests of cedar which were

my rightful home to squat as
entered-apprentice in the League
of the Liminal. I'd send Humbaba,

Bull of Heaven, to gore them.
Drowning in stickysweet liquors
of an age to pass among them

the students whose diligence
and lack of imagination paid great
dividends of belonging.

Limestone cladding everything
around me, and the sensibly rumpled
skin of the Live Oak, its parsimonious greens.

COORDINATES

Lena Khalaf Tuffaha

On our field trip we sing—as every child
of these cities does—نسم علينا هوا, and Miss Sahar
and the bus driver sway along to Fairuz. A war

engulfs nearby Beirut, shredding its portrait and
shipping its refugees across the Mediterranean,
but we sing, as Fairuz does,

we eat our labneh sandwiches and sing.
At Hadrian's Arch, Miss Sahar charges ahead,
never more alive than among these stones.

Swathes of wild mustard crowd
at the trunks of Jerash's rumis, school girls
at the feet of stately elders, speckling verdure with gold.

Miss Sahar gestures at the salvaged city,
at granite and limestone somnolent
in March light. Bypassing Zeus

and his cluttered temple, clopping
the cobblestones of the forum, she stands in full sun
at the center of the ancient road, waves

away tour guides. The Cardo runs North-South;
behind us, Amman. She faces the vanishing
point and says "el-Sham,"

our polaris of language and perfume.
I'm entangled in origin stories, I hear the pulse
of one word nesting in the womb of another,

so that when without irony, she says
"and to the West, Palestine," our ancestry
is once and eternally a sunset and an estrangement.

"And to the East, Baghdad," the ʿ of her sharq
crackling in the parched air.
Were we ever listening, as she conjured

the wars we would endure or succumb to, the spring
that would rise up and swelter, the cities
we would march through or flee from, cities

that would bury us or let us,
each one alone,
watch them burn

on screens so small
we held them
in our hands?

WHAT PICTURES CANNOT DO: AN INTERVIEW WITH LYDIA WILSON ON THE HISTORY OF WRITING



Australia Northern Territory 'Moon Dreaming Site', Episode 1 *Word History*,
Photograph: Crew Dox. © Dox Productions.

Lydia Wilson is a British researcher and scholar of the Middle East currently affiliated with the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford in the UK, as well as the City University of New York. Her work focuses on the motivations of participants in violent conflict. In addition to briefing the UN and other governmental agencies internationally, Wilson regularly appears on news and

media outlets to discuss current events and politics.

Wilson also edits the *Cambridge Literary Review* and has published many essays and articles in a host of magazines and academic journals, including the *New York Review of Books*, *Nautilus*, and *The Nation*. She is at work now on a book about extremism, which draws on her field research interviewing “Islamic State” fighters.

We spoke to Lydia Wilson by phone in mid-November 2019 to discuss her recent project with the BBC: *Word History*, a three-part television series about the history of writing. Wilson is the narrator of the show, guiding the viewer from the early pictorial writing systems of the Aborigines in Australia all the way to contemporary China, where teenagers congregating in a café text in a twenty-first-century amalgam of emojis and the Roman alphabet.

As you might imagine, representing the whole history of writing is a massive undertaking at any scale, and trying to distill the history to only the most camera-ready moments is like trying to squeeze the entire Library of Alexandria into a single Manila folder. Perhaps our conversation will give some sense of this conundrum: We covered quite a range of topics, spanning the origins of the alphabet, the political implications of script reform within a national language, how many cows it took to print a page of the Bible in the Middle Ages, and the boredom inherent in the process of filming.

What follows is an edited transcript of our call.

David Richardson: How long have you been working on the television program?

Lydia Wilson: It's been over a year now—our first filming was in October 2018. It's been quite a long process. A lot of my research has been put on hold until the major filming trips finish, and I have just started getting back into my more academic research a couple of months ago now.

DR: How much filming do you have left?

LW: We just have a few pick-ups left, so I'm in Leiden in a couple of weeks and then we have some shooting to do in London—some last minute, British-Museum-type pick-ups. Now that everything has virtually been edited we can spot a couple of little places where an additional shot could be useful, and that's all there is left now.

DR: Is this your first foray into television work of this kind? I know you've been on various news outlets in relation to your research on the Middle East.

LW: Yes! It was very fortuitous and it's been so much fun, and really wonderful to do something so different, actually. It took a little bit of getting used to, I have to say—I don't know that I've ever done something that has involved *so much boredom* combined with being *so terrifying!*

DR: Could you expand on that, the boredom and the fear?

LW: Well, I got used to the fear pretty quickly, to be completely honest, with the help of a really nice team—the cameramen and the sound person, they were excellent. I got used to the fear because that's just practice. The boredom I established strategies for.

Because I hadn't had the experience before, I didn't really understand the extent of how much waiting is involved in filming. I would be ready to do my bit, getting more and more nervous, rehearsing it in my mind, standing in the same position, while the director and the director of photography would start shifting the shot by a micro-centimeter, and then, of course, when you've shifted the camera by a centimeter, the background has to change, and then there's a light in the way, and then they have to relight it because they've taken the light away from the background, and that can be twenty minutes, and I'm just standing there getting more and more nervous. But when I finally figured out that that was normal, all I needed to do was to go somewhere with my notebook and sit there and say, "I'm here when you need me." So it was just about learning the strategies. I just didn't realize how much time was spent not actually filming on a set. And it's tiring hanging around—more tiring than I would have imagined.

DR: Yes, boredom can be quite exhausting.

It's extraordinary thinking about the ratio between one minute of film and the amount of time it took to produce, shoot, and edit that same minute.

LW: That would be horrifying to know, I reckon.

DR: I often think about the relationship between the time it takes to write something and the time it takes to read it, and that causes me great consternation.

LW: Yes, I don't want to think about that either!

DR: When you would tuck away with your notebook, rehearsing your part perhaps, was it a script that you were consulting? One you had written? Which is to say, what was your role in writing what you wound up speaking on camera?

LW: Actually, there wasn't a shooting script, which is an interesting way of doing it. I realize now it's unusual, and there are pros and cons—it's much more demanding on set not to have a script, but on the other hand you can respond to the people you meet on location that day, the people we interviewed. You don't have the rigidity of sticking to something. We quite often found out very interesting things just while we were on location.

The program, the series, had been in development for a long time without my involvement—I think it was over ten years. So a lot of the ideas were very familiar to the production team, but I had to get up to speed on them much quicker, and because I was the only person on the team with a background in history, that kind of proved to be somewhat useful in the writing.

DR: When you began working on the project, were you shooting more or less immediately? Which is to say, were you having those

discussions right off the bat? Or had you been consulting materials that had been prepared in advance?

LW: There had been a screen test—because I hadn't done anything like this before, the BBC of course needed a screen test. That was way back in July 2018. And then we didn't actually sell the series to the BBC for a while, but I was still working on the ideas and doing some background reading until the first shoot, which was the middle of October, when we had a few days in Cambridge, UK. So I'd had a little bit of time to get my head around everything, but it's just an enormous subject. We go from a pre-literate culture right the way through to digitization, and up to emojis in the present day. I couldn't prepare for everything, I just read frantically as I went.

DR: Are there books or articles which were particularly helpful? Or of especial interest?

LW: Andrew Robinson's *The Story of Writing: Alphabets, Hieroglyphs and Pictograms* was one source. As for anything else, it depends on the country, we spanned so much, I must have read dozens of them, but often only tangentially related. For example, Irving Finkel (a curator in Assyriology at the British Museum) has written very accessible books on cuneiform; for Egypt I read some of the excavation reports from the early twentieth century (Flinders Petrie's own) and Alan Gardiner's subsequent decoding of the script, but also got hold of modern textbooks on hieroglyphs, and read Orly Goldwasser and Pierre Tallet's work (both of whom we interviewed). For Uzbekistan there was less to

go on that was specifically about writing, but I read a lot of literature and work on the Sufism of Central Asia (Platonov, Ismailov; the first a Soviet era writer; the second a contemporary exile living in London), because of the relevance to the history of writing. For Australia, there was a lot about the importance of the land (Deborah Rose, and even Bruce Chatwin, but more importantly responses to Chatwin). I could go on and on!

My specific background is actually in Middle East studies—I have a PhD in medieval Arabic philosophy. I was giving advice on the role of writing in the Arab traditions, including calligraphy and the spiritual side of writing—for certain traditions like Sufism, there is a very mystical aspect to the Arabic language, for instance.

I mean, nobody is going to be an expert in all of this, and I had that kind of Islamic/Arabic side of the picture, as well as the general training in history.

DR: Did an interest in the origin of writing or the history of writing figure for you in your graduate studies?

LW: No, not at all. I was coming in having studied the tenth century, by which time writing was pretty established.

DR: Can you sketch out for the readers of *jubilat* the basic trajectory of the series? How many episodes, and is it organized chronologically? Or is it more place-based?

LW: So it's a three part series, taking in the history of writing. It is

broadly chronological, but it's also thematic—that's just the way it broke.

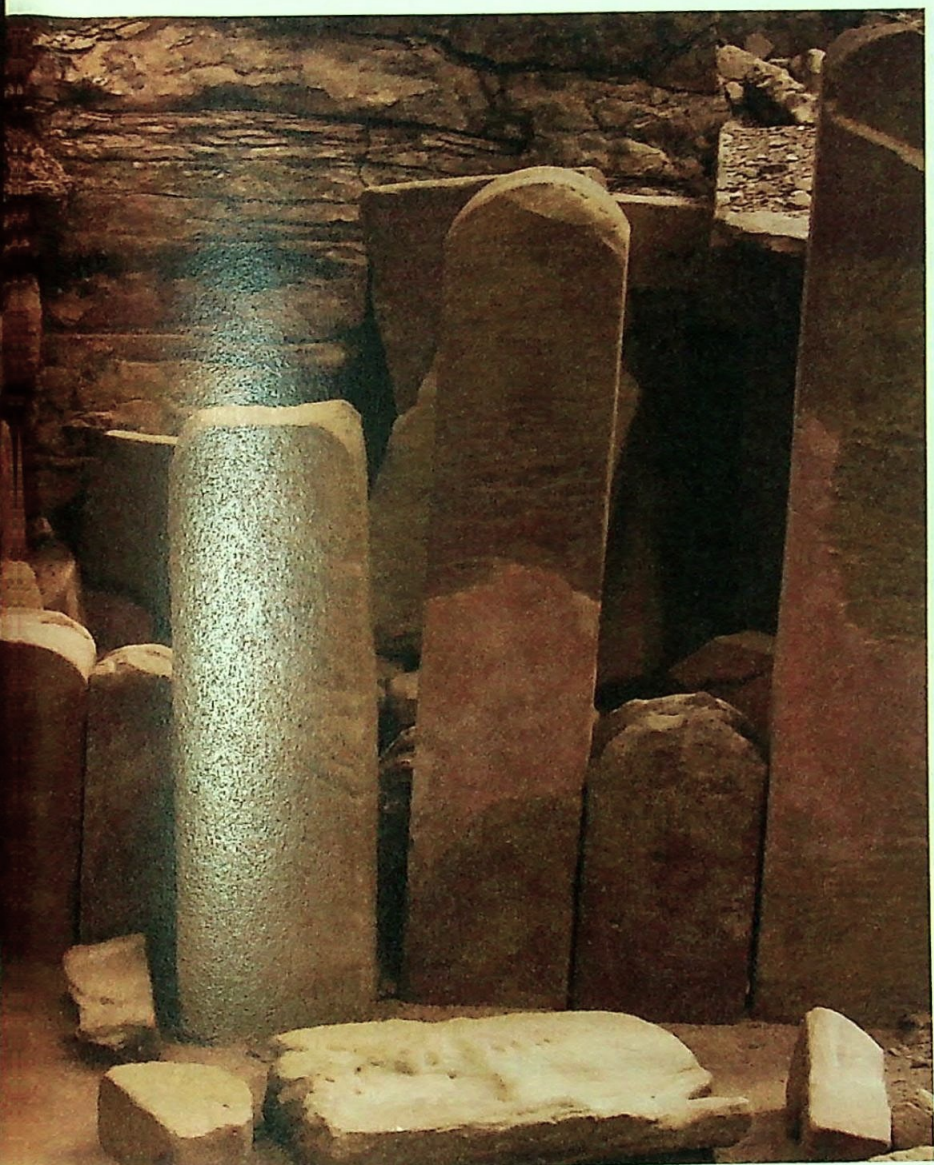
The first episode covers the emergence of writing. Now, it seems as though writing came about independently in four separate places. We start with the Aborigines in Australia, who have the most amazingly sophisticated and complex society. They have more social ties and rules governing those ties than any society I've been in, and yet, *they do it all through oral culture*. They transmit everything through song, so it's not necessary to have writing to have a very complex society. But there are some things that those societies will never do as a function of their lacking writing. At this point the series goes to Egypt.

In order to build the pyramids, you needed an extensive system of food redistribution and taxation, and you cannot run a bureaucracy like that without some form of record keeping. That's when you start getting the first marks on the first materials—it's to do with business transactions, or taxes, IOUs, those sorts of things. There's something that represents numbers and something that represents barley, or bread, or cows.

But fascinatingly enough, it emerged independently in China, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and later in Mesoamerica. It feels as though there is something, when humans gather together in certain sized groups, that promotes this kind of need. But even more interestingly, those four early systems operate identically. Chinese cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Mesoamerican hieroglyphics—they have nothing, aesthetically, in common. The cuneiform is practically abstract, and the hieroglyphics are beautifully detailed



Pierre Tallet among Stelae, ruins of Hathor's temple / Serabit El-Khabim, Episode 1.



Word History. Photograph: Crew Dox. © Dox Productions.

with pictures, but they are operating in *exactly the same way*, all four of them. Again, there's something about the common problems that humans are facing in these civilizations which leads them to solve them in the same way in order to capture their spoken language in a written format.

DR: Could you give a little primer for how those systems work?

LW: You start with pictures. You quickly realize, though, that there's a lot of things pictures can't do—they can't capture something abstract, and prepositions and time are both very difficult. So there's a step that happens in all four systems: instead of signifying a specific object, the picture is used to represent the sound. This is called the Rebus principle: Instead of having a picture of a duck represent a duck, you take the first letter of the word "duck" and the symbol codes for the sound of that letter, or perhaps the whole syllable. It's that step from symbol-as-picture to symbol-as-sound that allows you to capture a spoken language.

Then, if you're using the symbol for duck to mean both "duck" and "D," you've got ambiguity. So every single ancient writing system we know of adds a form of classifier or determinant, which is something you put either at the beginning or the end of the sentence to show which one you're talking about. If you mean it as a "duck," then you put in the classifier for "birds" so that you know you're talking about a duck, not the sound of the letter "D." These classifiers are unspoken. They are quiet elements of the sentence that clarify any ambiguity.

The inherent ambiguity, however, means that ancient writing

systems are actually much richer than our written language—you can write things in different ways, you can pun by using different forms of sound and picture, you can combine them differently. You can say the same thing in a sentence but you can write it differently, which we've lost in our alphabetic system. But, when you write a text message, and you put in an emoji, we've gone right back to those ancient writing systems. We don't speak the emojis, we clarify our emotions. Which is really cool!

Now something extraordinary happened about 4,000 years ago, in roughly 2,000 BC. It was in the Sinai Peninsula, which features in the series. In the middle of the desert on a high plateau, there's a temple to Hathor, the goddess of turquoise—there are turquoise mines all over this patch of the Sinai Peninsula. It was the edge of the known world for the Egyptians, but the turquoise was immensely important to their whole cosmology—you needed it in your tomb, you needed something the color of turquoise, if you wanted to rise again. Turquoise was the color of rebirth, the color of the sky at dawn. So they put a lot of time and effort into mining turquoise, both Egyptians and immigrants from the region. Immigrants traveled from the Levant—they were probably Canaanites. The Egyptians called them something like “Asiatics,” generic Easterners, because they came from the east, but we know their language was Semitic and so they were probably from somewhere in modern Lebanon.

These immigrants came and observed what the Egyptians were doing in the temple to Hathor, and one of those things was inscribing the detail of every single expedition, hoping for the

goddess' blessing so she would reward them with lots of turquoise. And so they looked at all these hieroglyphics and they began scratching their own. They were speaking a different language, and so they simplified the marks down—they copied the action of writing, but in a far more spare manner, and they missed out the symbol-as-picture step. They just went straight for the sound, and as a result *they invented the alphabet*. On the trailer, our contributor archaeologist Pierre Tallet, says, "and here we have one of the first A's in history, and here we have one of the first B's in history."

I was there! I touched the first alphabet in the world.

DR: Wild! I imagine there must have been countless moments like that in the filming of this project, moments when you felt exactly that sense of awe. Can you think of another one that was particularly exciting?

LW: Uzbekistan. I didn't even know where the Osman Qur'an was, which is the very first written Qur'an ever—it's famous in Islam. Osman was the third Caliph. In the seventh century, the very early days of Islam, he noticed that the Qur'an recitations were proliferating and he asked for it to be written down. And the Osman Qur'an is in Tashkent, in Uzbekistan. We filmed it, and that was extraordinary.

Filming the little sphinx from the Sinai, from Serabit el-Khadim, in the British Museum was also amazing, because it's the key—it's the Rosetta Stone of the alphabet. The little sphinx is how we know what these scratchings on the mines were, because there's a



Uthman Qur'an Tashkent, Episode 2, *Word History*. Photograph: Crew Dox.
© Dox Productions.

chunk in hieroglyphics and a chunk in this early alphabetic script and so we can figure out what's going on. The hieroglyphics spell out the name of Hathor, while in the alphabetic script they've scratched the name of their goddess—it's not Hathor, but Ba'alat, the kind of correlate goddess.

Being in Australia was also phenomenal, just listening to traditional songs.

DR: Perhaps we can pause there for a moment—the series begins in Australia, right? Talking about the Aborigines?

LW: Yes, we had three days in the northern territories, in the bush.

DR: So that's the opening of the series—Australia and Egypt—

and where do we go next?

LW: So we cover all that early writing, and then the birth of the alphabet in the first episode. I think the birth of the alphabet is pretty much where we end the first show, because it took a while for the alphabet to catch on. The Egyptians, for instance, definitely didn't want it—we still have hieroglyphics right up to AD years: There was power in their writing, they weren't keen on the alphabet, on changing their system. Eventually, it did catch on, and it enabled digitization. You couldn't code with any other system. And it enabled printing. This is where the second episode takes off.

The technology of printing arguably triggered major political and religious change in Europe. People like Luther were able to pack up a printing press and put it on a horse—it became so much easier to disseminate ideas. And that had a huge implication for all sorts of areas of knowledge, which means it was a factor in how Europe came to dominate globally, and it was all just an accident of the Latin alphabet, which happens to be more suited to printing (it's not cursive, like Arabic, and it's alphabetic, unlike Chinese). So that's the technology of writing, and we also cover the art of writing, as in calligraphy. With calligraphy we get added meaning: There's the aesthetic meaning, but also in different traditions there is spiritual meaning. In China, for example, it's actually a test of your moral standing, the way you write. Your handwriting was assessed in the imperial exam to show what kind of character you had.

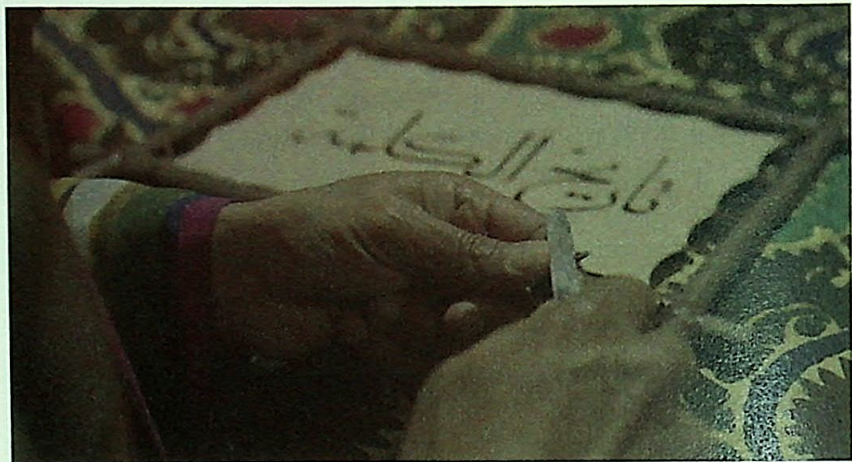
For this second episode, we filmed some wonderful work—it's called water calligraphy, in China. It's like Tai chi in that it is both a physical exercise and spiritual practice. They use enormous paintbrushes filled with water and they paint on the ground. We were there in July, when it's very hot, and the writing evaporated extremely quickly. It's a zen practice—you cannot reflect on your past mistakes or your past glories, you have to live in the moment. It's all drying before them, but they're still writing and writing all over the ground!

So the series goes into all the additional features of what writing has come to mean in a society. Really, it's everything on top of a means of communication.

DR: I love thinking of the water calligraphy, the way evaporation figures as a kind of zen publishing technique. A way to get things out into the world and then to move on.

Can you think of other moments from the series that exemplify the spiritual valence of writing?

LW: We had a wonderful calligrapher in Turkey, in Istanbul—a very traditional practitioner. He told us all sorts of stories. One of the things was that when you are a calligrapher, you keep all your pencil shavings from your whole entire life, and at the end of your life, they burn them to heat the water that washes your body before burial. We watched him fill up this little pot with his pencil shavings.



Calligrapher Dzhallil sharpening pencil, Episode 2, *Word History*.
Photograph: Crew Dox. © Dox Productions.

DR: That's an incredible image, and a beautiful way to think about the work of a writer, that the amount you make facilitates your passage into the afterlife. It's also interesting to think of writers as playing, in part, for the next world.

After covering the very beginning of writing and the alphabet in episode one, and the flourishing of the practice of writing and the technology of printing in episode two, where does the third and final episode take us?

LW: The third episode is entitled "Script as Identity."

What has happened throughout history is that different religions have taken their script across to different parts of the world. In

Britain, for example, we wrote in runes for a long time, and even when the Romans conquered the territory, runes were still very common. But with the coming of Christianity runes disappeared altogether. We had the Roman alphabet from that time on.

Similarly, Islam took the Arabic script all over the world. The Turkic people of Central Asia were writing in many different scripts—Sogdian was the one in Uzbekistan, for example, and eventually it was all moved over to the Arabic script, even though the Turkic alphabets aren't very well-suited to the Arabic script. That was recognized by Atatürk in 1928 when he wholesale transferred Ottoman Turkish into Latin letters—there was also language reform, but the script reform was a huge statement of identity. It showed he was pivoting very much toward Europe and away from the traditional seat of the Caliphate, which was what Istanbul had been for over 400 years.

In addition to the profound cultural effect, the Latin script was also a better fit for Turkish. Arabic doesn't include many vowels, and Turkish isn't a Semitic language, it isn't cut out to be expressed like that—there are huge amounts of ambiguity if you don't have enough vowels. And the letters don't match—Arabic has different sounds than Turkish, so there are some letters which just were never used and there were other letters they didn't have. So it could be argued that Latin has worked out better anyway in Turkey.

Script reform in Central Asia has been even more drastic and tumultuous. In Uzbekistan, Lenin's script reform invoked the theory

of Turkic solidarity. The first script reform away from Arabic in Uzbekistan was actually to Latin letters because Lenin felt that they should be able to communicate with the Turks, because Uzbek is a Turkic language. So for ten years they had a Latin script. If you think about it, that involves rewriting all the textbooks, rewriting all the street signs, rewriting all the bureaucracy. Then ten years later, Stalin comes in and makes it all Russian script. He changed it all to Cyrillic. And so then for I don't know how many decades, maybe five or six, they're writing their languages in Russian letters. And then comes the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, and all of these Central Asian republics have to make their decision, and they all chose Latin. It's just easier to fit in with the globalized world we live in. So in one century, they've used Arabic, and then Latin, and then Cyrillic, and then Latin again. Which means that you are, in some very fundamental way, cut off from your past. You can't read the letters between your grandparents if you've been educated in a different script. The language is the same, but you can't read it. You cannot go to the cemetery and read your grandparents' gravestone. And that's just one example.

Mao tried to reform Chinese, he tried to bring in some element of Pinyin and it just didn't catch on—Chinese culture is just too much associated with the Chinese writing system. But what Mao could not achieve, even as a dictator, capitalism has, because the kids are all texting in Latin letters. So it is happening now, and it's happening in countries with Arabic script, too. We have a scene in the series with young people in a cafe in Cairo, and a lot of them are texting their language in Latin letters. So there are other script reforms happening now, just not official ones.

DR: Fascinating to lay out that script literacy is, in an important sense, historical literacy, and the switch between scripts conducts an immense amount of power. If your relationship with your past or your tradition is complicated by script reform, you are subject to a kind of statelessness, of the mind but also perhaps literally. Not being able to read your grandparents' letters is such a harrowing example.

LW: Yea, you can't imagine it, can you really?

DR: Not at all. Thinking about familial texts that are in my language but rendered inaccessible to me by virtue of a script change is just so invasive.

So this is all packed into these three episodes, and each episode is a kind of supercut? You move between locations, talking to experts or practitioners, etc.?

LW: Yes, exactly.

DR: How does the series deal with the practice opposite writing: reading?

LW: Yes, actually, that's interesting—we have got a little bit of neuroscience on this count in the show—Tae Twomey, a Japanese scientist living and working in London, features in the series. She tested people reading Japanese in the different scripts that they have (every Japanese person can read in different scripts, like the pictorial Chinese system, and then the simplified system). She

conducted experiments on readers, scanning their brains while they were reading the same language in different scripts. She found—and I'm probably vastly oversimplifying—that there are certain pathways in the brain when you're dealing with visual information, and others when you're dealing with audio information (essentially what you're doing when you're reading an alphabet is hearing it and so it goes through the auditory pathway, but you're recognizing the shapes as well, so there is an aspect that goes through the shape-understanding one). When you learn how to read, you're spelling it out, but once you're literate you're combining the sound with the visual recognition of the shape. What she found was that the two different scripts—one strictly pictorial, and one alphabetic—called on both of those pathways to comprehend the text, but there was just a slightly different emphasis on the pictorial for the Chinese characters version. But essentially we all use both. We all hear them in our heads and we all see them on the page, whatever script system we're working with.

DR: In addition to neurological accounts of reading, does the series discuss any history of reading practices? Does it touch on literacy? Obviously there is a huge shift in that second episode with the birth of printing.

LW: The series does not cover it so much, though we definitely cover the literacy aspect of reform, and of course printing did have an enormous effect on it. Well, actually not so much printing as the technology of paper—that has a much bigger effect. After the Roman empire fragmented and lost Egypt, Europe lost its access to papyrus, which is a very, very cheap way of making paper, of



Skins being stretched in wooden frames at Cowley's parchment factories, Episode 2, *Word History*. Photograph: Crew Dox. © Dox Productions.

making a surface to write on. Europe pivoted away after that and used parchment, which is phenomenally expensive. If you think of a big Bible, for example, you only really get four pages out of one cow. It takes a whole herd of cows to make a Bible in the Middle Ages.

To illustrate the difference paper makes, consider this: there were tens of thousands of books in libraries in ancient Rome. One of the biggest libraries in Europe in the High Middle Ages, Cluny, had about two hundred, and that's one of the most famous libraries of Europe! That's a function of the material limit, because you can find a scribe to copy you out something if you have a little bit of money, or you can copy it out yourself if you have the time. But the substrate is a bigger limiting factor really.

Then, with the fall of Constantinople and a load of expertise coming Europe's way, paper got figured out, and things took off again. And printing is the rest of this story.

Essentially, though, literacy is much more about education than any form of writing, as we see in the case of China: literacy rises without simplifying the writing system, through mass education. The same is seen all around the world: the script or technology is never the limiting factor.

APOLOGETICS #5

Emma Wippermann

Which privation gives
best pleasure; there's
doxology post
sacrament, a ripened
grape hung to
fail all measures
of material: it's
attention that is
the highest form
of prayer. After
peeling a skin in
the pew sharpened
surfaces of the prie-dieu;
praise be
to present you
faultless before
her presence

APOLOGETICS #7

I think about the frequency of contact, and the shiver that comes
at the base of my neck. In all its sweetness. Certainly nice,
my shirt on the clothesline, I'm in it now and You've held me.
Beauty secretes certainty, a capacity tried each day
by leaving the house. But where else to find it. I mean, good
clouds that eclipse sweet to awe. I am in the blue sweater,
watching them cluster, clouds more solid than I ever could be.
I never liked a clear day, unfair brightness not
sometimes askew to shadow. My shiver. Our soft
atmosphere alone is not tender; clouds drop water with
no life to punish and a gust will
move them; whereby angels live there.

Angels have been seen here, by people related to me. You relate
so constantly it's only I who approach cyclically, with caution.
Wearing pants and shoes, in which You've held me.

Damn the storms when clouds punish for no crime. Earlier I lied
and it was not for You, who know the Absence of Good. Evil as
inaction of any graceful thing. And angels, unconscious in so many safe
clouds. At night, this evening, our garden holds the privation of light
for its sleep. Conditions in which certainty can leave.

I know weightfulness; the far-flung sentiment of reality.

Hereby I know You, shyly, as I walk to the shed. Through a
thick dark abscessed around what's familiar.

As rain and ether soak things, You will always
be here. And I will both love and be always alone.

SUCCESS, NOMINATIVE

Leah Xue

Yvan said, we had the same niche
when he had long hair and, like,
DFW chic. Then the girls came:
hoards wild for
the trees. In dreams,
I kill Yvan: stampede
or by fire, ecologically
succeed.

TROT, CANTER, GALLOP

During the leisure weekend my father rowed across the Huang Pu and having no hair, the wind blew through it.

My sister dipped her finger in the water, a forbidden and beloved delight.

On the Wilderness Island, the styrofoam horses drove faster and faster by golf cart.

The man-dug Huang Pu, the natural embankment, the domesticated horses, the friction of manufactured concrete.

Mother says in Mongolia they drive golf carts with horses in would be stampede.

In Mongolia the men in the golf cart laugh and laugh.

CLOSER

Felicia Zamora

My chin to the ardent sky. How you never told me about the whiteness of sunlight. How sunlight contains all colors; all colors mixed up & in collection, appear white. How this light heavies my eyelids, here in nape of this rock formation, this snaking trail in the valley of a valley, desert tongue germinates inside these jaws. How I imagine your hands in weight upon my shoulders, wrists, ankles, jugular, drawing blood because you too, contain the spikes & spines & lineage of cacti: short growing season, long dormancy; one may even think you a ghost, illusion of a wanting mind, if these ocular cavities didn't resemble a blurred & sepia photograph, first studied & inhaled moth balls & cedar chests at the age of sixteen. A photograph in mirror of my ridge of cheeks, slope of nose, square of my mandible in hold of my infant body tight to your chest; still a clutch in incubation in your arms. How you never told me this light passes, tangles in the atmosphere & scatters. Smog & dust & particles reconfigure & the blue, the blue in the light separates most. The blue hangs the sky, reminds us of pieces & wholes & untetherings. You never told me. How could you? You coyote, voiceless among the ridge, miles out from me, in spook if I draw one step closer. You whose face floats amid the mulberries at twilight, as the firefly abdomens illuminate, then darken, illuminate, then darken, illuminate, then darken.

PLACES *JUBILAT* LIKES TO VISIT:

Antidote Books



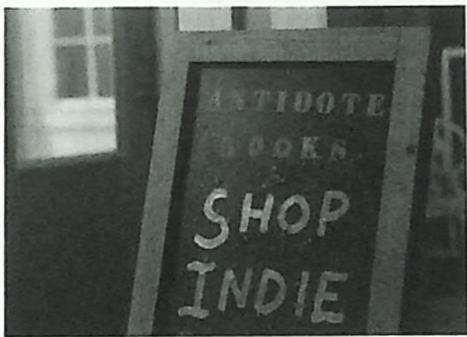
"There's something interesting about not knowing, being naïve and going into the space of starting something new," says Ruth Rodriguez.

In summer 2017, Ruth and her husband Jeremy Sowell opened Antidote Books in Putney, Vermont. Neither had owned a brick-and-mortar bookstore before, but they had very specific ideas for what they wanted it to become. Many of those ideas were inspired by their participation in poetry readings and literary events in their hometown of Houston, Texas.

"I could never have anticipated how grateful and honored I am to be able to create a space for books, and especially for poetry and readings," says Ruth. "This is a wildly indulgent way to be in the world."

Transforming the space in a circa-1835 Greek Revival building—initially a parsonage for a church and later the town post office—was a monthslong effort. Ruth and Jeremy tackled most of the work on their own with the help of Ruth's father, crafting everything from the bookshelves to the sign out front. This allowed them to get the shop as close as possible to how they imagined it, balancing literature-filled nooks and corners to get comfortably lost in with a welcoming, open space for the readings they host throughout the year.

Besides books, they also feature the work of a handful of artists such as poet Paige Taggart's Mactaggart Jewelry and Erika Duran Scrocca's Era-dura Hand Embroidered Goods. And last year, Jeremy started roasting coffee under the Duchess Coffee Co. label, with all the beans sourced from women-owned farms in Central and South America. This brought in an entirely different crowd of people to the shop, more than a few of them ending up as new poetry enthusiasts.



"I love all the questions," Ruth says, "and how someone can just be taken by a poet they didn't know and how those words become a texture of their lives. What we see is pretty magical."

Visit Antidote Books at 120 Main Street in Putney, and find out more about the store and their readings on instagram at @antidotebooks.

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JORDAN STEMPELMAN is the author of nine collections of poetry including *Wallop, No, Not Today*, and *COVER SONGS COVER SONGS COVER SONGS OFF DAYS* (forthcoming). He co-edits *The Continental Review*, serves as the faculty editor for *Sprung Formal*, and curates *A Common Sense Reading Series*.

ROSIE STOCKTON is a poet based in Los Angeles. Their first book, *Permanent Volta*, recipient of the 2019 Sawtooth Prize, is forthcoming from Ahsahta Press in 2020. Their poems have been published by *Publication Studio*, *Monster House Press*, *Big Big Wednesday*, *Flint Magazine*, *A Plume Journal*, and *WONDER*.

BRITTANY TOMASELLI earned her MFA in poetry from Columbia College Chicago. Her chapbook *Since Sunday* won the 2018 Omnidawn Chapbook Prize. Her work can also be found in *Fairy Tale Review*, *The Wanderer*, and *Columbia Poetry Review*.

OJO TAIYE's poem "Elegiac" is the winner of the 2019 Hart Crane Poetry Prize. His writing has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Grist Journal*, *Fiddlehead*, *The Well Review*, *Lambda Literary*, *Glintmoon*, *Banshee*, *Ruminate*, *Savant-Garde Journal*, and *Strange Horizon*.

ZOE TUCK was born in Texas, became a person in California, and now lives in Massachusetts. She is the author of *Soft Investigations* and *Terror Matrix*. Her website is zoetuck.com.

LENA KHALAF TUFFAHA is a poet, essayist, and translator. She is the author of *Water & Salt* (winner of the 2018 Washington State Book Award), *Arab in Newsland*, and *Letters from the Interior*.

LYDIA WILSON is a British researcher and scholar of the Middle East currently affiliated with the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford in the UK, as well as the City University of New York. She edits the *Cambridge Literary Review* and has published essays and articles in magazines and academic journals including *The New York Review of Books*, *Nautilus*, and *The Nation*.

EMMA WIPPERMANN is a poet in New York. Her first book, *Pleasure as a Series of Objects*, is forthcoming. She has an MFA from Brown University and is working on a poem-novel about Joan of Arc/Arkansas.

LEAH XUE's poetry has appeared in the *Harvard Advocate*, *Prelude*, and *DIAGRAM*. She received a Galway Kinnell Memorial Scholarship to the Squaw Valley Community of Writers in 2019. She earned her MFA at the University of Michigan, and lives in lower Manhattan with the dog Poopy Xue.

FELICIA ZAMORA is the author of *Quotient*, *Body of Render*, *Instrument of Gaps*, & *in Open*, *Marvel*, and *Of Form & Gather*. Her work may be found or is forthcoming in *Academy of American Poets Poem-A-Day*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Indiana Review*, *Lana Turner*, *North American Review*, *Poetry Daily*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Georgia*

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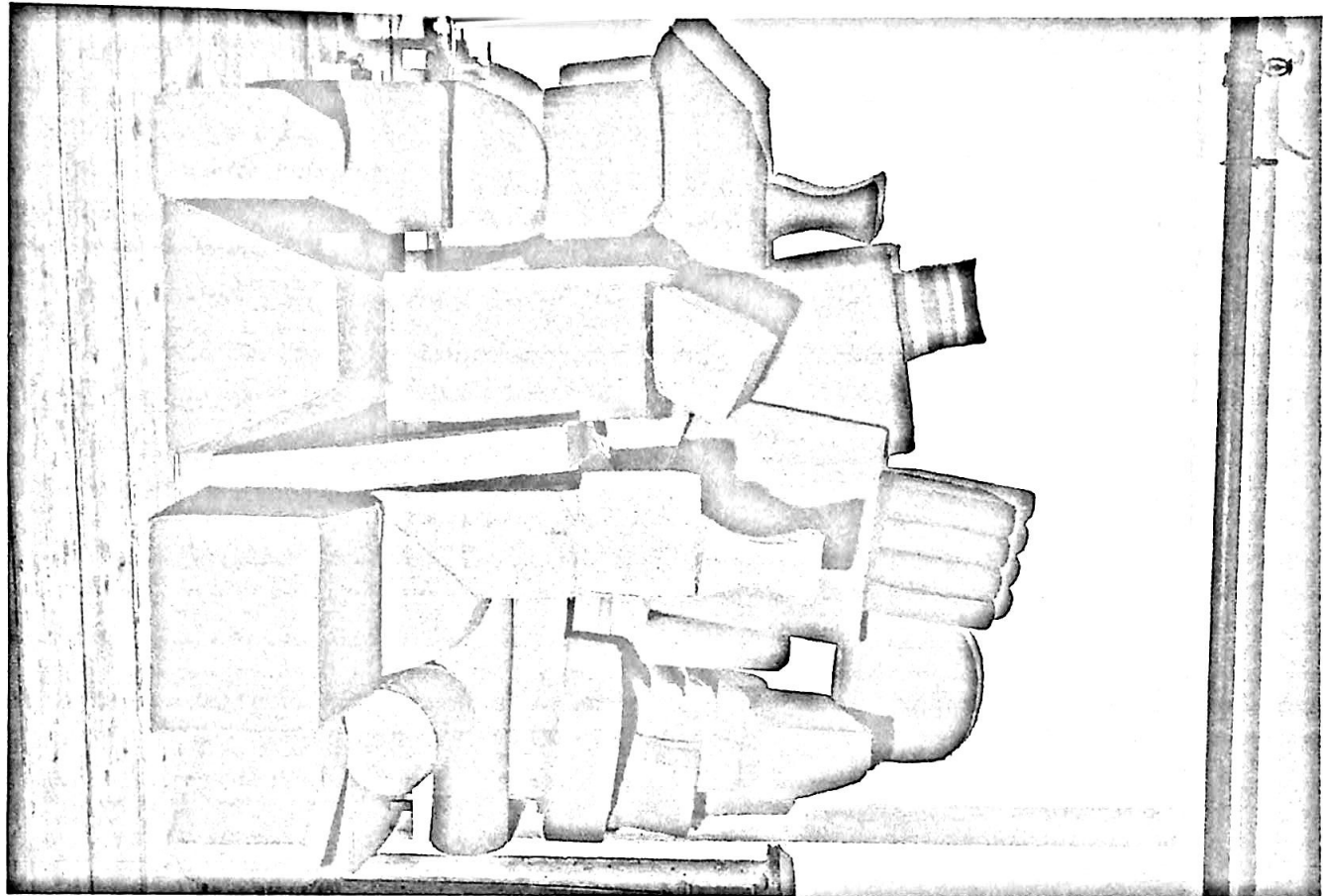
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Reading Room collects essays and visual projects about the practice of reading and documents the reading residency series hosted by dispersed holdings in the fall of 2016. dispersed holdings is a platform for publishing and listening practices co-founded by Sal Randolph and David Richardson. Edited by David Richardson. Published by dispersed holdings.

The background of the image is a detailed, monochromatic pattern. It features large, symmetrical scrollwork motifs that resemble stylized acanthus leaves or classical architectural scrolls. Interspersed within and around these scrolls are delicate floral sprigs, possibly of roses or similar flowers, with small leaves and buds. The overall style is reminiscent of 19th-century decorative arts or wallpaper patterns. The text 'blush' is superimposed on the upper portion of this pattern.

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